

**WORKERS' PARTICIPATION IN TRADE UNIONS :  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SINGLE UNION AND  
MULTIPLE UNIONS IN TWO AUTOMOBILE  
INDUSTRIAL UNITS**

A Thesis Submitted  
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

*by*  
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*to the*  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, KANPUR**

**MARCH, 1987**

*Dedicated*

*To*

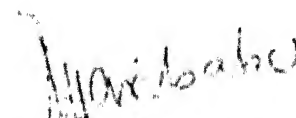
*My Parents*



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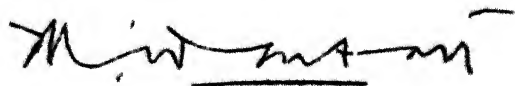
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AITUC	- All India Trade Union Congress
AIADMK	- All India Anna Dravida Munnerta Kazhagam
ALU	- Anna Labour Union
BEU	- Bimetal Employees Union
CITU	- Centre of Indian Trade Unions
CPI	- Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	- Communist Party of India (Marxist)
DK	- Dravida Kazhagam
DMK	- Dravida Munnerta Kazhagam
INTUC	- Indian National Trade Union Congress
LPF	- Labour Progressive Federation
SESU	- Simpson group Employees and Staff Unions
SC	- Schedule Castes
ST	- Schedule Tribes

## SYNOPSIS

### WORKERS' PARTICIPATION IN TRADE UNIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SINGLE UNION AND MULTIPLE UNIONS IN TWO AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRIAL UNITS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by S. Masilamani to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India, February, 1987.

Industrialization brought out new social order in the societies. The trade union which emerged as a result of the industrialization is considered as one of the new institutions in this new social order. Trade union in the industrial relations system is viewed as a power equating institution. That means the trade unions check the power of the management over individual workers.

(The present study attempts to investigate the extent of members' participation in trade union activities. This study of members' participation in trade unions, views union as having a structure and organizational framework and tries to identify the relationship: (a) among its members; and (b) its interaction with other institutions or agencies which influence the internal affairs of the union.) The structure and organization of a union consists of: (i) government of union; (ii) pattern of leadership; (iii) communication; and (iv) norms governing the relations among the members. The union as representative body of the workers interacts with: (a) management; (b) other unions; and (c) the state and its agencies.

## Statement of Problem

Number of factors affect the stability/strength of the trade union. One of the most important factors which influences the strength of the union is the extent of participation of the members in the union activities. There are two important questions which help us in understanding the participation of members in the union activities: (a) why do some workers participate more than others?; and (b) why do some unions elicit greater participation than others? In this study these two questions are investigated to understand comprehensively the participation of members in their union activities.

The review of existing literature suggests that a group of scholars has sought to explain members' participation by relating levels of participation to socio-economic and demographic background of the members. These scholars did not try to systematically investigate the influence of the social organization of the trade unions on members' participation. On the other hand, others attempted to find out the relationship between social organization of the unions and its influence on members' participation in union activities. But they have excluded investigation of the relationship between socio-economic background of the workers and participation. Studies carried out by the scholars belonging to the two groups derived their conclusions based on either

single-union situation or multiple-union situation. In the context of Indian industrial relations at a micro-level, meaningful understanding of the dynamics of unionism can be gained by comparing levels of participation in single-union situation and multiple-union situation.

Existing literature also shows that history of union-management relations and its influence on social organization of the unions and ultimately its effect on participation remains almost untouched by sociologists who studied the member's participation in union activities.

Keeping in view the lacunae in the existing literature, this study attempts to investigate the members' participation within the context of: (a) history of union-management relations over a period of time; (b) structure and organization of trade union; and (c) socio-economic background of the workers. Further, it compares the extent of participation in single-union situation and multiple-union situation. The study adopts the theory of union democracy as a framework for analysis.

#### Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are:

- (1) to find out the influence of history of union-management relations over a period of time on structure and organization of the unions;

- (2) to find out the influence of structure and organization of the trade unions on members' participation in union activities;
- (3) to find out the influence of socio-economic background variables on members' participation in union activities in the context of a given organizational framework of a union.

### Methodology

The present study is a comparative study of participation of workers in their unions in two situations: (a) single union; and (b) multiple unions. The industrial units selected for the purpose of the present study are located in Coimbatore. The single union plant (Bimetal Bearings one of the units of Simpson group of companies) manufactures bearings for heavy vehicles and the multiple union plant (Thomson Radiators) produces radiators for automobiles. The Bimetal Bearings has a single union i.e., Simpson group Employees and Staff Union (SESU). The Thomson Radiators has 4 unions in total. They are: (1) a union affiliated to Center for Indian Trade Unions (CITU); (2) a union affiliated to All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC); (3) a union affiliated to Labour Progressive Federation (LPF); and (4) the fourth union affiliated to Anna Labour Union (ALU). For the purpose of the present study in the multiple-union firm, we have selected the CITU, AITUC and the LPF unions and excluded the ALU union because it emerged only a few months before the study was



carried out. From these unions 159 workers were selected by adopting systematic random sampling technique. Data were collected from knowledgeable workers, union leaders, to supplement the primary data collected from the workers in the sample. Further, data were collected from sources such as union publications (Pamphlets, Magazines etc.) and local news papers.

### Summary of the Findings

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter deals with existing survey of literature and the statement of the problem. It also explains the theoretical framework which is used in this study. Chapter two deals with method by which units under study were selected, selection of respondents and procedure by which level of participation is computed.

The third chapter deals with the analysis of socio-economic background of the workers. The analysis reveals that more than half of the workers are below 35 years old and few of them are above 51 years old. It is found that most of them have secondary school level education and 4th of the workforce is technically qualified. Workers in our study mostly belong to non-Brahmin local dominant high-caste groups and the Harijans are under represented. Nearly eighty percent workers are married and eighty percent are Hindus. More than half of them are urban-born. It is found that

industry in Coimbatore is able to draw nearly half of the workforce from within the region. Regarding the experience of the workers it is observed that more than half of the workers have been working in the same plant for a period ranging from 11 to 30 years. In terms of occupational mobility of the workers' families, it is found that half of the number of workers are second or third generation industrial workers.

In chapter four the history of unionism in the two units under study is discussed. The history of unionism in these two units shows that unions have had political linkage since their inception. Events in the political arena outside the industry influenced the dynamics of unionism over a period of time. In the Simpson group of companies the SESU was backed by the then ruling Congress government of Tamil Nadu. The union leader's contest in 1967 General Election for Parliament led the supporters of opposition political party Dravida Munnerta Kazhagam (DMK) to turn into a factional group within the union. This factional conflict became bitter and the then union president resigned from the office in 1971. The factional group backed by the ruling DMK government foisted a new union leadership without majority's support. Again, only with the active participation of the members and with the help of the opposition political parties, the members were able to make the union democratic in 1972. In course of time these factions became institutionalized in the union and

in turn they have been serving as a life-blood of union democracy. From the history of the SESU it is found that with political patronage and the patronage of the management the leadership became oligarchic. The workers attempted to restore a degree of democracy by changing the leadership.

In the case of multiple-union plant, the first union emerged in 1963 due to the economic hardship of the workers as well as the paternalistic, authoritarian and arbitrary attitude of the employer towards workers. Antagonistic attitude of the management towards unionism forced the young union to operate as a secret society for some time till it could draw enough support from the members. Originally the union was affiliated to the AITUC. Later on, due to the split in the Communist-Party affiliated central trade unions into AITUC and CITU, the union in the Thomson Radiators became affiliated to the CITU. Later, the leadership of the CITU became oligarchic by entering into coalition with the management. Because of the absence of factionalism in the CITU union, the members who supported the ruling DMK party (in Tamil Nadu) started rival union affiliated to the LPF in 1969. In 1976, due to changes in the national political scene as a consequence of the Emergency declared in 1975, all the members of the LPF switched their loyalties and got their union affiliated to the INTUC because of vested interests of some union leaders. It is found from history of unionism in

Thomson Radiators that mainly due to political developments outside the industry, management's policy towards recognizing unions and some leaders' selfish interests new unions emerged. The multiple unionism and its linkage with the management as well as the relatively limited size of the workforce in Thomson Radiators the unions failed to pursue the cause of the labour effectively.✓

The history of unionism in these two units reveals that the economic hardship and exploitation of labour by management led the workers to organize themselves. Inter-union rivalries, factionalism weakened the workers' strength and simultaneously the rivalries placed the management in an advantageous position. In both the units the managements encouraged some union(s)/faction(s) to come closer to the management. The evolution of union-management relations over a period of time brought into existence a certain pattern of relations between them at the time of the study. The SESU and the LPF unions evolved antagonistic relations with their respective managements, and the CITU union evolved pro-management leanings and the AITUC exhibited shades of both pro-management and pro-workers leanings according to the situation.

Chapter five deals with social structure and organization of the unions under study. Analysis reveals that the SESU and the LPF unions are governed by democratic norms. That is, the members are given freedom to: (a) participate in decision-

making process; (b) discuss things in the union meetings; (c) elect leaders of their choice. Further, there exists democratic style of leadership which listens to members' problems solves them effectively. This democratic milieu in these two unions is found to enhance or promote members' participation to a higher degree. On the other hand the CITU and the AITUC unions are found to be undemocratic and oligarchic. In these two unions members are not given full freedom to: (a) participate in decision-making process; (b) discuss things in the union meetings; (c) elect leaders of their choice. The oligarchic and pro-management union leadership does not solve problems of members effectively. The situation that prevails in the CITU and the AITUC unions are opposite to the situation that prevails in the SESU and the LPF unions.

In chapter six analysis of levels of members' participation in union activities is presented. It shows that the participation of the members in the SESU and the LPF unions is greater than the participation of the members in the CITU and the AITUC unions. A comparison of the influence of the single union/multiple unions on levels of participation shows that single union or multiple-unions per se do not seem to exercise significant influence on workers' participation in their unions. However, the democratic or oligarchic structure and its relation with the management seem to exercise great

influence on members' participation. The participation is greater in the union if it has democratic structure and antagonistic relations with management. On the other hand participation of members' is found to be low if the union has undemocratic structure and pro-management leanings.

Chapter seven deals with socio-economic background of members and its influence on members' participation in union activities. It is found that democratic or oligarchic pattern of union alone does not influence the members' participation fully. To a certain extent members' socio-economic background variables also influence members' participation. A preliminary analysis of the relationship between socio-economic variables and participation provided a list of variables which significantly influence members' participation. The variables which influence the participation significantly were again analysed separately for democratic unions and oligarchic unions to see why a minority of workers in the democratic unions have low participation and why a minority of workers in oligarchic unions display high level participation. It is found that in the democratic unions, the inactive minority workers are the young workers who do not have enough experience and security of job. They are unmarried and have relatively low level of income. They live in large size households and commute to work either by walk or by public transportation system. On the other hand it is found that



in the oligarchic unions the minority of active workers are middle aged or young, possess high school level education, enough experience and job security. They are also married and earn reasonably high wages. They live in medium or small size households and commute to work by their own means of conveyance such as bicycles or two wheelers. The low participation by minority in the democratic unions and high level of participation by a minority in the oligarchic unions seem to be influenced by their socio-economic background.

Chapter eight, contains the conclusions of this study. Findings of this study provide some insights in understanding the problem of members' participation in union activities. Based on the findings of the study following generalizations may be made..

- (1) The union oligarchy does not necessarily arise due to increasing complexity and size of the union. In the Indian context the oligarchic trade unionism at plant level emerges due to coalition between the union leadership and the management. A numerically small union may also become oligarchic.
- (2) Changes in the union-management relations over a period of time influences the present day social organization of a particular union. Therefore, if a union has evolved pro-worker ideology and antagonistic relation with the management then it tends to be largely democratic union.

If a union has developed pro-management leanings it tends to be oligarchic union.

- (3) Union democracy enhances or promotes members' participation in union activities. That is, when members are given equal opportunities to participate in decision-making; discuss things in the union meetings; and elect the leaders of their choice the members' participation is high. The pattern of democratic style of leadership which listens to the problems of workers and solves them effectively also enhances participation.
- (4) Oligarchy in the union hinders members' participation in union activities. When members are not given equal opportunities to participate in decision-making; discuss things at union meetings; and freedom to elect the leaders of their choice the participation tends to be low. Added to this the oligarchic leadership which does not solve the problems effectively contributes to low-level participation among the members.
- (5) When there is scope for institutionalized factions, members take part in the factional politics actively. The well organized factions within union serve as forums to express members' feeling and promote membership participation. Hence, organized factionalism serves as a life-blood of union democracy.



- (6) When there is no scope for factionalism within union due to oligarchic nature of the leadership it leads to emergence of new union(s). The union members do not seem to discipline their leader. Confronted by an oligarchic leader they either switch their loyalties to other leaders or start new unions. In either case there exists a possibility for the emergence of oligarchic leadership. This divides working class.
- (7) Within the framework of union democracy or oligarchy, certain socio-economic variables influence the participation of members in union activities.

In a nutshell, members' participation is influenced by history of union-management relations, existing social structure and organization of the unions and certain socio-economic background variables of the members.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Industrialization has brought about a new social order in society. The trade unions emerged as a concomitant of the process of industrialization. The trade union is one of the institutions in this new social order. Trade union in the industrial relations system is viewed as a power equating institution.

An industrial organization consists of two groups: (a) employers; and (b) employees. Both the groups participate in the production process. Industrial relation is nothing but the interaction between the employers and employees which occurs at the place of work. However, historically in most societies the State has assumed an interventionist role. The degree of intervention considerably varies in different societies at different points of time. Norms, rules and regulations laid down by the State to regulate the interaction between the employers and employees also form part of industrial relations in most societies. Therefore industrial relations consist of the interaction amongst capital, labour and State. Industrial relation involves the employees and their representative organization i.e., the trade unions, the employers and their representatives i.e. the management, and the State and its agencies. The present study attempts to investigate the extent of members'

participation in trade union activities. The trade union has an internal structure and organization. Internal structure is the pattern of interaction between; (a) union as a collective organization and individual members on the one hand; and (b) the members and the leaders on the other hand. The structure and organization of a union consists of: (i) government of union, (ii) pattern of leadership, (iii) communication, and (iv) norms governing the relations among the members. A trade union as an organization cannot be treated as a water-tight compartment. When we talk about the internal affairs of the union, we have to consider certain external elements which influence the internal relations. The external elements such as, the management; other unions; the State and to a certain extent the society at large influence the internal affairs of the union. The members of a trade union have direct interaction with their own union and with their leaders. Interaction between members of a union and other institutions like management, other unions or State agencies generally takes place through their union representatives or leaders.

### Management and Workers:

Given the power and control of the management over individual workers, workers as individuals are powerless to safeguard their interests. Trade unions emerge to protect the interests of workers on a collective basis.

As we have mentioned earlier, the trade union in the industrial relations system is a power equating institution. That means the trade union checks the power of the management over individual employees in an organized manner. Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1950: 1) define a trade union as a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives. In other words, the trade union has to safeguard the workers' interests. Why does the trade union need to safeguard the workers' interests?

The need for protection of rights of employers and employees should be understood in terms of their basic interests. Owners and their representatives, usually called management, on the one hand, and workers and their unions on the other, strive for proclaiming opposite interests. The main aim of the employers is to maximize profit. Schneider (1957: 343) commenting on employer-employee relations says that management considers wages paid to workingmen one of its costs of production and, in many industries, a major cost of production. Therefore, it is to the management's advantage to keep the costs of labour low, either through minimizing wages, maximizing hours, reducing the number of employed workingmen, or making their labour more efficient through the use of machinery. On the other hand, workers expect more returns for their efforts in

production or they expect wages to be commensurate with their work. Thus, the interests of the workers and the management are diametrically opposed. These conflicting interests lead to differences of opinion. The difference of opinion may be on anything like, wage, bonus, working conditions, disciplinary matters etc. However, both the groups participate in production. The relationship that exists between them is one of antagonistic cooperation.

When we talk about organized groups in the industry each party attempts to be strong enough to face the other group. Since an individual worker does not have power comparable to that of the management, he, as an individual, cannot protect his interests and advance his economic status. In this context, unions represent, a collective empowerment of workers so that they could bargain and negotiate with the management. Thus, unions are interest-groups of workers and they derive their viability from their power relative to management. As Hyman and Fryer (Quoted: Tandon, 1984: 24) argue:

Capital has a higher power over labour and this is partly due to its access to the state's legal and coercive support. Thus, owners and managers of capital have unlimited power over the fate of an individual worker. It is this power that a union attempts to countervail. Therefore, a trade union's success in meeting its goals depends upon its power relative to management and is exhibited in its interactions and negotiations with the management.

The trade union should be strong in order to offset the unlimited power held by the management. How can the trade union be strong? A number of factors affect the stability, and strength of the trade union. One of the most important factors is the degree of participation of the members in the activities of the union. The extent of participation obviously has implications for the strength or weakness of a union. Trade unions gain their strength by the active participation of the members. A union which is sustained by the members who are active will be in a better position to check the power of the management. The interaction among members in the union has certain structure. This structured interaction is based on certain norms and values. A trade union, in order to realize its goals, evolves an organizational framework which facilitates interaction among its members and its interaction with other institutions. To carry out the activities of the union, an internal division of labour comes into existence. The important aspect of the division of labour in a union consists of the division of tasks between the leadership and the rank and file. The leadership's responsibility is to represent the collective interests of the workers and also to be accountable to the rank and file. In the process of discharging its responsibilities the leadership acquires certain power to negotiate with the management. The power obviously is derived from the rank and file. It is imperative that in order to achieve



its goals the workers' organization should have a democratic structure. That is, the interaction among the members of the organization should be governed by democratic norms such as egalitarianism, equal opportunities for members to participate in various activities at various levels and communication based on equality. Once the union democracy comes into existence it enhances further participation of the members.

The union democracy does not operate in a vacuum. Its survival and its effectiveness depend on several factors: (a) the extent of members' participation; (b) the pattern of leadership; (c) and its relations with the management. Union democracy gets weakened if the leadership attempts to promote its self interests over and above the collective interests of the workers. The leadership may develop vested interests and continue to hold the office adopting various means such as aligning itself with the management, or building a personal following among the rank and file. This may lead to apathy among the members. These tendencies are detrimental to the union democracy and may turn the union into an oligarchic organization.

Before stating the problem of this study and its main objectives it would be relevant to briefly survey the existing literature on trade unions in India in general, and studies on workers' participation in trade unions in particular. This exercise will not only help us to

identify the gaps in the existing literature but also to sharply focus our attention on the problem.

### Labour Studies in India:

Scholars belonging to different disciplines in social sciences have attempted to study the emergence, growth and development of labour movement in India. Punekar (1948), Giri (1958), Sharma (1963), Mathur (1964), Johri (1967), Karnik (1966), Crouch (1966), and Revri (1972) have attempted to study the emergence and growth of trade unionism in India. Most of these studies are concerned with the interaction among capital, labour and the State. These studies arrived at more or less similar conclusions regarding the background against which trade unions emerged in India. The two World Wars created economic crises and in turn gave birth to organized labour movement and growth of trade unionism. The Indian nationalist movement mobilized the working class to achieve national independence. As a result, in India, since the introduction of modern industry, labour movement has been interwoven with politics. The trade union dynamics developed against the backdrop of the national political movement, State policies and the policies of entrepreneurial class. Further, these studies analysed the process of differentiation in the trade union movement, the development of factionalism and the resultant formation of different trade union organizations in the country.



Studies in industrial relations in India until the mid 1950's were mainly conducted by economists, historians and administrators. Economists and administrators were interested in seeking solutions to problems like, union rivalries, low productivity, labour costs, and loss of mandays in industry. However, some scholars analysed trade union movement by focusing on the origins of the Indian working class and the labour market as it emerged. Scholars like Buchanan (1966) and Myers (1960) attempted to describe the emergence of industrial working class, its characteristics, commitment to industrial way of life and so on, in addition to inquiring into the origins and growth of trade unions. They concluded that in the earlier stages of industrialization, industrial labour force mainly consisted of rural small peasants, landless groups, artisans and members of lower castes. The peasant-proletariat members had maintained their contacts with their ethnic affiliations and their rural communities. The ethnic affinities influenced the nature of working class and its participation in industry. These features of the industrial working class made some authors comment that the Indian industrial worker is not committed to an industrial way of life. But the later studies conducted by scholars like Morris (1960), Lambert (1963), Indian Labour Commission (1969), Sharma (1979), and Harriss (1982) concluded that except in the traditional industries such as textile and jute industries the industrial workers in India today

are: (a) urban born, (b) educated, (c) second or third generation industrial workers, and (d) from diverse caste groups.

### Micro-level Labour Studies:

Though the macro-level studies give some idea about the labour movement at national level they do not help us in understanding the unionism at plant level. Commenting on the limitations of the macro-level studies Murphy (1981: 1) points out:

Useful as these (macro-level studies) are for providing a broad framework in which to place the development of individual unions, they tell us nothing about the actual unions, the workers who supported them or the mechanics of labour organization in the many industries scattered throughout a country which is noted for its regional diversities. Ideological splits among labour leaders or wranglings over the selection of officials to attend International Labour Organizations Conferences had little relevance for the man at the work place.

In contrast to earlier macro-level studies, scholars began to concentrate on micro-level empirical studies on industrial relations and trade unions in the mid-sixties.

The micro-level studies carried out by scholars like Karunakaran (1966), Baviskar (1968), Pandey (1967, 1968), and Bogear (1970) attempted to find out the causes for emergence of multiple unionism. They observed that: (a) management's policy over recognition of unions; (b) presence of outside leadership; (c) internal factions in the union;

(d) failure of a union to solve the members' problems; (e) political affiliations of the unions; and (f) existing legislation on trade unions contributed to the emergence of multiple unionism. In the multiple-union situation the management tends to exploit labour (Pandey, 1968). On the other hand Karunakaran (1966) in his study found that mere presence of multiple unions does not necessarily lead the management to exploit the workers because when the problems arise all the unions join together to fight for a solution. Scholars like Thakur (1968), Tripathi (1968) noticed that in a competitive, multi-union situation the management tends to develop a policy to deal with workers' grievances individually rather than collectively. This 'divide-and-rule' policy curbs the working class solidarity. It is found that in this kind of competitive multi-union situation the workers also tend to ignore the institutionalized framework for solving problems and workers represent their problems directly to the management rather than approaching the unions. Pandey (1968), Baviskar (1968), and Thakur (1968) observed that in the multiple-union situation unions demonstrate their strength over other unions by organizing lightening strikes etc. Multiple unionism appears to weaken the strength of the workers.

Some of these studies focused their attention on pattern of leadership. The moment we say leadership of the trade unions, in the Indian context, it refers to outside

leadership. Crouch (1966), Puneekar and Madhuri (1967), Ramaswamy and Uma Ramaswamy (1981) and Murphy (1981) identified that the earliest labour leaders were philanthropists, social workers, and professionals who were moved by the conditions in which the workers worked and lived. The typical attribute of the outsider was his superior socio-economic position vis-a-vis the workers. He belonged to a middle class family, and was educated and reasonably well-to-do. However, some studies indicated that the leadership has been emerging from among the rank and file. In one of the recent studies, Tandon (1984) noticed that rank and file union leaders are more educated, have higher skilled jobs and higher salary compared to the average workers. Scholars like Ramaswamy (1977) and Mamkoottam (1982) observed that the style of union leadership influences the relationship between workers and their leaders. These scholars attribute democratic or oligarchic pattern of union leadership to the leaders' individual characteristics.

As mentioned earlier the association between politics and unions has been existing since the inception of unions in India. Indian trade unions have been closely linked with political parties since the emergence of the organized labour movement. Crouch (1966), Bogcart (1968), Ramaswamy (1977), Ramaswamy and Uma Ramaswamy (1981), Murphy (1981a), Mamkoottam (1982) and Joseph (1986) pointed out that the earliest unions were formed and nurtured by the political

leaders. The pattern found at the national level is to some extent reflected at the plant level too. Sheth and Jain (1968), Pandey (1968), Thakur (1968), Tripathi (1968), Karunakaran (1966), Baviskar (1968), Bogeart (1968), Mamkoottam (1982), Murphy (1981a), Patil (1984), and Joseph (1986) identified a close nexus between politics and the trade unions at micro-level also. The association between politics and trade unions influences the unions in general and labour-management relations in particular. Crouch (1966) viewed that in the underdeveloped countries politicization of unions is inevitable and Bogeart (1968) substantiated this view by claiming that the association of unions with politics would broaden the goals of the unions. Sheth and Jain (1968) found out that involvement of members in politics induces them to participate actively in union affairs.

Scholars like Crouch (1966) and Ramaswamy (1983) pointed out that the State in the developing countries like India interferes in the industrial relations in general and labour movement in particular through enacting legislations. The ostensible purpose of this interference is to protect labour but in actual reality it regulates and controls labour. Apart from controlling labour movement through legislations, the State agencies sometimes encourage multiple unions at micro-level. Bogeart (1970) observed that in Calcutta port the representatives of the government played a crucial role

in encouraging unions based on ethnic loyalties. Patil (1984) noticed that, of late, unions based on castes are emerging in India. He noted that existing unions failed to solve the problems of the SC/ST workers, due to the domination of higher castes in union leadership and managerial positions. Because of this SC/ST unions emerged.

The foregoing survey suggests that micro-level sociological studies have concentrated on: (a) the emergence of multiple unions, (b) pattern of leadership, (c) nexus between unions and politics, (d) State intervention in the industrial relations, and (e) the unionism based on ethnicity. Now we shall devote our attention exclusively on studies which have attempted to deal with members' participation in union activities.

Sociological studies on members' participation in trade union activities mostly devoted their attention to analyse the relationship between the socio-economic background of the members and their participation in union activities. Studies which concentrated on the relationship between socio-economic background variables and participation have not been able to arrive at a consensus on the nature and the extent of the influence of background variables - such as: - age, education, caste, marital status, rural-urban background, economic status, etc. - on levels of participation. This will be evident if we examine the conclusions



of some of these studies. Now we shall briefly review the studies which relate participation to socio-economic background of the workers.

### Age and Participation

Sociological studies on membership participation conducted in India considered age as one of the important variables which influences participation. Sheth (1969) found that middle-age group to be distinctly low in participation compared with those in the young and old age groups. Sharan (1978, 1985,) in her study of women workers of Kanpur found that young workers at initial stage of their career tend to take active part in the union activities. However, Sharma (1971) Sinha (1983) and Sahay and Sinha (1985) observed that there is no relation between the age of the members and the extent of their participation in union activities.

### Education and Participation

Education plays a vital role in creating a general awareness in the social life of the people. Sharan (1978, 1985), Sinha (1983) and Sahay and Sinha (1985) noticed that formal education induces the members' participation in union activities. But on the other hand Sheth (1969) and Sharma (1971) found that education has no significant relation with participation. Sheth (1969) believes that persons with more education may have strong attachment to

their jobs and hence may not want to participate in union work except in so far as such participation is likely to serve their immediate individual needs. Further, he views that people with little education are in disadvantage with regard to interaction and communication within union, and therefore, show low participation in trade union activities. He seems to point out that workers with middle-level education are more active than those with high level education or with low level of education.

#### Ethnicity and Participation:

Some scholars attempted to analyse the influence of caste and religion on workers' participation. Sheth (1969), Sharma (1971) pointed out that caste is an insignificant variable in terms of its influence on members' participation. On the other hand, Sinha (1983) and Sahay and Sinha (1985) observed in their study of four unions that in one union caste was highly influential in members' participation. Sheth (1969), Sharma (1971), Sharan (1978, 1985), Sinha (1983) and Sahay and Sinha (1985) attempted to find the relation between different religions and their impact on members' participation. All these studies concluded that religion does not affect membership participation in union activities. These findings show that increasingly the Indian worker is becoming class-oriented in his industrial behaviour.



### Rural-urban Background and Participation:

Extent of influence of rural-urban background on participation was considered by some authors. Sharma (1971), Sinha (1983), and Sahay and Sinha (1985) noticed that there is no relationship between rural-urban background and participation. However, studies conducted in other countries have revealed that rural-urban background influences the participation of the members. Sayles and Strauss (1953) found that those with rural background are less involved in their unions than those brought up in an urban environment. On the contrary, Vall (1970) noted that increased urbanization increases the membership apathy in union activities.

### Marriage, Family and Participation:

Marital status of worker is one of the variables that was included in some of the studies on workers' participation. Sharma (1971) noticed that participation of married workers is higher than that of the unmarried workers. On the other hand, Sheth (1969), Sharan (1985), Sinha (1983) and Sahay and Sinha (1985) observed no significant relation between marital status and participation. Some scholars also attempted to find out size of the household of workers and its impact on members' participation. Sheth (1969) in his study pointed out that a significant relationship between level of participation and the number of dependents the worker had to support. He found that participation of

workers who have larger households is higher. But Sharma (1971) observed that there is no significant relation between size of the household and members' participation.

#### Job Security and Participation:

According to some authors job-security seems to determine the level of members' participation in union activities. Sharan (1978) observed that those with stable jobs show a more active participation in their union activities. But on the contrary Sinha (1983) noted that job insecurity induces greater membership participation. Relationship between the length of service in a particular firm and members' participation was analysed by Sheth (1969), Sharan (1978), Sinha (1983), and Sahay and Sinha (1985). Sharan (1978) observed that workers who have reasonable length of service are highly active in the union affairs. Sinha (1983) found that length of service is significant in the three unions out of the four unions he studied.

#### Income and Participation:

Very few studies conducted in India examined the relationship between income and level of participation in the union. Income from the job is found to be an important variable which influences members' participation. Sayles and Strauss (1953), Spinrad (1960) and Sharma (1971) pointed out that participation is found to be high among the workers who draw high income.

### Political Leanings and Participation:

Some authors have pointed out that political leanings of the members influence the extent of their participation in union activities. Sheth and Jain (1968) and Ramaswamy (1977) found that membership involvement in politics enhances their participation in union activities. On the other hand, Sharma (1971) noticed that political leanings do not affect the participation. Joseph (1985: 289) who studied the urban transport workers in Tamil Nadu concluded that there is a significant relationship between the level of worker involvement in his trade union and the level of powerlessness he experiences irrespective of personal, social, economic and political characteristics, employment and union-related characteristics.

We find that there is no consensus on the extent of influence of socio-economic background variables. Findings of these studies which relate participation to demographic and socio-economic background provide at best partial explanation on members' participation. They do not provide theoretical insights. Only a few scholars recognized the limitations of the explanation regarding the extent of membership participation merely based on socio-economic and demographic background. Only a few scholar like Ramaswamy (1977) and Mamkoottam (1982) analysed the relationship between workers and their unions. They devoted their

attention to social structure and organization, of the union and its impact on members' participation in union activities. Ramaswamy (1977) observed in his study that workers' participation is not influenced by members' socio-economic background alone. He points out that day-to-day experience related to their work, union leaders' behaviour towards members, management's policy towards labour and their political and societal links play vital role in influencing members' participation. On the other hand, Mamkoottam (1982) discovered in his study that workers were apathetic towards their union. He observed that workers were divided on the basis of their caste, religion and even the region where they come from. The company's paternalistic style of management and economic affluence led the members to be apathetic to their union. Further, the organizational structure of the union was not democratic. He observed that the leadership was oligarchic and corrupt. Leadership showed favouritism in settling issues and helping the members. He concluded that the union was a part of the company. This situation led the members to be apathetic towards their union. To arrive at a meaningful understanding of workers' participation, the workers with their demographic and socio-economic background have to be placed in the total system of industrial relations.

## Theoretical Framework:

The extent of participation of the workers in their unions varies from individual to individual and from one union to another. The purpose of our study is to find out: (a) why some unions elicit greater participation than others; and (b) what makes some members participate and what makes others apathetic. There is a need for some model or theoretical framework within which these questions can be raised.

Existing theories on labour movement propounded by Selig Perlman (1928), Frank Tannenbaum (1951), Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1926), and Schneider (1957) focus on the problems around work related interests such as alienation, security of jobs, and job control etc. To them the reasons mentioned above were responsible for emergence of labour movement. While these theories explain the emergence of labour movement they do not talk about members' participation in the day-to-day affairs of the union.

We have mentioned earlier that in this study, the trade union is considered to have a structure and an organization. The structure and organization imply the relations between the union leaders and the members on the one hand, and organizational division of labour among the members on the other hand. The organizational structure of the union may be democratic or oligarchic. It is found

from the previous studies (Lipset et al., 1956; Ramaswamy, 1977; Mamkoottam, 1982) that union democracy enhances members' participation. In contrast, oligarchy in the union hinders active participation by members in the union activities. It is evident that social structure and organization of the union influence the participation of the members to a great extent. Democratic or oligarchic government of unions has been the focus of attention of social scientists since Robert Michels has propounded his famous theory of the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy'.

According to Michels, oligarchy in the large complex organization is inevitable. Even the organizations such as trade unions and political parties which started democratically and subscribed to democratic ideology are bound to become undemocratic. Michels (1949: 401) argues:

It is organization which gives birth to the domain of the elected over the electors, of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization says oligarchy

He further, points out that the complex organizations require special skill and talents to assume the leadership position. The socio-economic and ideological superiority of the leadership create a vast gap between leaders and the rank and file. The administrative tasks involved inevitably lead to a creation of a bureaucracy which by its very nature is undemocratic. The effective operation of the organization



requires a specialized division of labour which necessitates control and coordination from the top. Faced with this bureaucracy and the complexity, rank and file members of trade unions leave the matters to their leaders. Michels maintains that organization inevitably produces oligarchy, that is, rule by a small elite.

Michels believes that complex organization essentially produces oligarchy. Sometimes the union oligarchy does not necessarily arise due to increasing complexity and size of the union. In the Indian context the oligarchic trade unionism at the plant level has been shown to emerge due to coalition between the union leadership and the management. A numerically small union may also become oligarchic.

While Michels argues that oligarchy in large complex organizations like trade unions is inevitable, Lipset, Trow and Coleman (1956) who studied the International Typographical union (ITU) propounded the theory of union democracy. They observed two organized parties in the ITU. According to them the two party system provides a constant check on the party in power and serves to generate alternative policies to those of the existing leadership. There is a high degree of participation by the rank and file who have the power to effect real changes in union policy and to control the activities of their leaders. They observed that the printers in the ITU have a strong identification

with their craft which encourages direct participation in union affairs. According to Lipset et al., the printers tend to form occupational communities and organize a variety of social clubs for members of the craft and from the experience of organizing and running such clubs many printers learn the political skill necessary for participation in union politics. In addition, social clubs provide union activists with the opportunity to encourage the more apathetic members to become involved in union activities. Lipset et al. , argue that combination of the above factors led to democracy in the ITU.

Lipset and his associates identified the nexus among the social clubs, occupational communities and other non-work activities, union politics and members' participation in union activities. In the Indian context it is well known that unions hardly play any role in the life of the workers beyond factory gate. Trade unions have remained predominantly work-place organizations. They may have brought about a degree of economic unity among the workers but they have not been able to create social unity among them. In other words, trade unions have not been able to play any role in the social life of workers outside the work-place.

Following Lipset et al.; Martin (1968) elaborated the role of factions in union democracy. According to Martin, factionalism serves as the life-blood of union



democracy. The survival of factions limits executive ability to disregard rank and file opinion by providing the potential means for its overthrow. Faction is able to function as the watchdog of democracy because of the mobilization of members for political action. Participation in factional politics implies participation in the union because factions do not function apart from the union. While Lipset and his associates and Martin heavily rely on two party system and factions respectively, Edelstein (quoted: Ramaswamy, 1977a: 475) believes in close electoral contests. He opines that democracy requires a formal union organization which throws up candidates of near equal strength for elections and ensures close electoral contests. He claims that rank and file interest and participation in union affairs is a basic pre-condition for democracy.

In India, the factions do play a role in union democracy. We have seen, from the existing literature on labour studies in India, the factions turn into rival unions because of various reasons such as selfish interests of the leadership, ideological differences of the factions, labour policies of the concerned management etc.

All these scholars agree on the point that members' participation is necessary for union democracy. The theories on union democracy propounded by scholars mentioned above attempt to find out under what circumstances

the union democracy exists. There are limitations of these theories in terms of their scope and applicability.

Commenting on the adequacy of these theories, Ramaswamy (1977a: 467) points out that if western research on union democracy is unable adequately to comprehend its own experience in a theoretical frame it fails even more when applied to non-western, and in particular third world, situations. Mamkoottam (1982: 105) commenting on the existing sociological theories, points out that an organizational theory of worker participation or worker apathy is sociologically inadequate. He suggests that it is only by placing the union in the wider context that we can hope to achieve a fuller understanding of the problem of worker participation or worker apathy in trade unions.

Keeping in view the limitations of the theory of union democracy, in our study we shall use the union democracy model with some modifications. It is well known that it is difficult to provide causal explanation in social sciences. In the context of union democracy and participation it is difficult to demonstrate which is the cause and which is the effect. Both act as cause and effect alternatively. In our present attempt, we do not reject the thesis that participation leads to union democracy but we assume that the existence of democracy in the union facilitates or enhances members' active participation in union activities.

This approach will be useful to answer the questions that the present study raises. These questions are: (1) why do some unions elicit greater participation than others? (2) why do some workers participate more than others? We have already mentioned that social structure and organization of unions influence the members' participation in union activities. When members in a union have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making, on issues related to day-to-day affairs and emergency situation like strike action, based on majority consensus, to discuss things at union meetings, to elect union leaders of their choice without fear, respond to members' problems to their satisfaction, there participation by members tends to be greater. In this situation, the norms governing the interaction among the members of a union tend to be democratic norms. We mentioned above that given the conflicting interests and contractual relations between the workers and owners, the members of a union take decisions and act upon them to protect their interests through their union. When the workers take decisions to protect their interests, the union develops antagonistic relations with management. Only a democratic union can pursue the cause of labour effectively. In other words, a democratic union by and large develops a pro-worker ideology and antagonistic cooperation with the management.

On the other hand if the members of a union are not given full freedom to participate in (a) decision-making on issues related to day-to-day affairs and emergency situations; (b) to discuss things at union meetings; (c) to elect union leaders of their choice; and (d) members' problems are not solved effectively, then members' participation tends to be low. A union which denies opportunities for membership participation or enables only a small section of the members to participate, cannot pursue the cause of labour effectively and it assumes an oligarchic profile. Oligarchy in trade unions arises not only because of increasing complexity and bureaucratization but also because of other factors such as the leadership's vested interests in perpetuating itself and its alignment with the management. This is essentially the case in countries such as India. An oligarchic leadership requires several props to perpetuate itself. One of the props is the alignment with the management. In the context of multiple unionism at micro-level the management further perpetuates the divided unionism by playing one union against another. This situation pushes some unions closer to the management.

The earlier studies which analysed the relationship between socio-economic background variables and participation have adopted a view that socio-economic background variables per se influence participation. They have failed to examine the relationship between socio-economic background

and levels of participation in the context of the structure of the union. That is why they have not been able to make theoretical generalizations. A fruitful way of looking at the relationship between the socio-economic background variables and levels of participation would be to analyse the relationship between socio-economic background variables and participation in the context of the structure of the union. For example, a democratic union generally encourages participation of all the members irrespective of their socio-economic background. In oligarchic union the participation would be restricted.

The above discussion leads us to put forward some propositions: (a) union democracy enhances members' participation; (b) democratic union is likely to have pro-worker ideology and antagonistic relations with the management, and the existence of antagonistic relations with the management further promotes higher levels of participation among union members; and (c) within the framework of union democracy certain socio-economic background variables of the members also influence levels of participation of the members.

#### Statement of the Problem:

The present study raises the following questions: (a) why do some unions elicit greater participation than others? And (b) why do some workers participate more than others?

Investigation of these two questions will enable us to understand comprehensively the participation of members in their union activities. The review of existing sociological studies on members' participation in union activities reveals the following things:

A group of scholars (Sheth, 1969; Sharma, 1971; Sharan, 1978; Sinha, 1983; and Joseph, 1985) has taken into account certain socio-economic, and ideological attributes to explain the members' participation in trade union activities. Research studies of these scholars investigated why some workers participate in union activities more than others. However, they failed to analyse why some unions elicit greater participation than others.

Another group of scholars (Ramaswamy, 1977; and Mamkoottam, 1982) has attempted to analyse the relationship between the workers and their unions. Through the existing pattern of relation between the workers and unions they investigated members' participation in their union activities. But these scholars did not include the socio-economic background of the members to find out its influence on members' participation in trade union activities.

However, some scholars (Sheth, 1969; Sharan, 1978; and Mamkoottam, 1982) did recognize the influence of the history of union-management relations on workers' participation in their unions. But they did not systematically analyse the

relationship between the history of union-management relations and workers' participation in trade unions.

Some studies have been carried out in a multi-union situation and others have been carried out in a single-union situation. This may lead to problems of comparability of the findings and hence creates a gap in having comparative picture of members' participation in trade union activities in single and multiple union situations.

Keeping in view these lacunae in the existing literature, the present study intends to investigate the members' participation by adopting a holistic perspective. It takes into account: (a) the history of union-management relations over a period of time, and its influence on the structure and organization of the union; (b) social structure and organizations of the unions and their influence on participation of members; and (c) socio-economic background of workers and its influence on members' participation in the context of the structure of the union. The present study differs from other studies in the sense that it is a comparative study of the participation of workers in two types of situations i.e., single and multiple-union situations.

#### Objectives of the Study:

The major objectives of the study are: (1) to find out the nature of influence of history of union-management



relations on structure and organization of the unions;  
(2) to find out the influence of structure and organization of the trade unions on members' participation in union activities; (3) to find out the influence of socio-economic background variables on members' participation in union activities in the context of a given structure and organization of a union.

In essence the study attempts to examine the impact of union management relations on workers' participation in their unions indirectly. It tries to analyse the impact of the structure of the union on members' participation directly. Further, the study examines the influence of the socio-economic background of the workers on their levels of participation in the context of the structure of the union.

### Key Concepts and Meanings

#### Trade Union:

In this study trade union means, an association formed exclusively for protecting the workers' interest, which may be social, economic and political.

#### Members' Participation:

According to J.R.P. French Jr. (Quoted: Blumberg, 1968: 70) participation refers to a process in which two or more parties influence each other in making certain plans,



policies, and decisions. It is restricted to decisions that have further effects on all those making the decision and on those represented by them. He defines participation in the context of decision-making, but participation has number of other aspects other than decision-making.

Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958: 50) define participation in a union as the extent to which members involve themselves in and devote energy to the operation of the union.

In this study participation is defined as the extent of members' involvement in union activities. Participation may be formal or informal. One can list a number of items of informal participation of members in an organization or union. It will be difficult to incorporate all the aspects of informal participation. In this study participation is limited to the formal activities of the union.

#### Democratic Unions:

In this study, by democratic union we mean a union that gives its members equal opportunity to participate in decision-making during normal situations i.e., day-to-day affairs and during crisis situation such as strike period; gives equal opportunity to discuss and dissent in the union meetings; gives full freedom to members to elect the leaders of their choice; and is characterized by a responsive leadership which listens to members' grievances and tries to

to solve them. Only such a union is considered a democratic union.

### Oligarchic Unions:

By oligarchic union we mean a union which (a) does not give full freedom to all members or restricts freedom of the members to participate in decision-making during normal situations, i.e., day-to-day affairs and during crisis situation such as strike period; (b) does not give equal opportunity to all members to discuss and dissent in the union meetings; (c) does not give full freedom to elect the leaders of their choice without fear; and (d) the leadership does not listen to all members' grievances, and leaves the problems unsolved. Then it is said to be oligarchic union.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The present chapter has dealt with a review of existing literature on labour studies in India, sociological studies on members' participation, theories of union democracy and the research questions raised by the present study.

Chapter two deals with research method. It includes a discussion of the procedure adopted to select: (a) the industrial units; and (b) the workers for the purpose of the present study. Further, it discusses the method by which the extent of participation is computed.

The third chapter deals with the analysis of socio-economic background of the workers. In this study we have included background variables, such as age, education, caste, religion, marital status, size of household, types of household, rural-urban background, distance of migration, types of recruitment, job-security and economic status of the workers. This chapter provides a profile of the workers in the two automobile industrial units selected for the purpose of the present study.

In chapter four, the history of unionism in the two units under study is discussed. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the history of union in the single union plant and in the second section, history of unionism of the multiple-union plant is presented. This chapter establishes links between evolution of union-management relations in the two units and its influence on the social structure and organization of the trade unions.

Chapter five deals with social structure and organization of the unions at the time of the study. Under social structure and organization of the unions, government of unions, such as decision-making process, union election, communication and leadership response to members' problems are discussed. Based on the pattern of interaction among the members the unions are categorized into democratic or oligarchic unions.

Chapter six analyses levels of members' participation during normal situation as well as participation of members during crisis situation. The chapter further describes the levels of participation of members in democratic and oligarchic unions.

Chapter seven deals with socio-economic background of members and its influence on members' participation in union activities. In this chapter analysis is carried out in two stages: first, we shall examine the relationship between the socio-economic background variables and levels of participation. Based on the significance of the relationship, we have selected some variables to examine if their influence is uniformly similar in different structural milieus of the unions. This will help us to see if the socio-economic background variables per se influence the levels of participation. The analyses in the chapter reveals that the structure of the union is an important variable that influences the participation of workers with different demographic and socio-economic background.

Chapter eight contains the summary of the findings and conclusions of this study. Based on the findings of the study some theoretical generalizations are forwarded.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

The present investigation is a comparative study of members' participation in their trade unions in two industrial units manufacturing automobile components. In one unit the workers have a single union and in the second, the workers have four unions. As mentioned in the last chapter this study deals with the extent to which members involve themselves in and devote energy to the functions of the union.

The Place of Study: Coimbatore is one of the biggest industrial cities in Tamil Nadu. The first textile mill was started in Coimbatore in 1888 (Bopegamage and Veeraragavan, 1967: 113). Rapid industrial development took place after the World War II. According to a recent study, textile industry still dominates the city and provides about 50 per cent of registered manufacturing employment (Harriss, 1982a: 9). The demand in cotton spinning mills for various types of machines gave rise to the emergence of engineering industry. Today, Coimbatore is also well known for engineering industries and occupies second position in terms of providing employment.

The important engineering industries are: basic metal industries - foundries for the casting of iron and other metals, and manufacturing textile machinery, light machine tools and prime movers, and metal industries fabricating

structures for factory buildings. In addition, engineering industries are concerned with manufacturing of automobile accessories such as radiators, bearings, tyres, chains etc. have also grown rapidly. There are also mills which specialize in aluminium rolling.

Along with the growth of industries and its work force, the labour movement also emerged. The year 1920 saw the beginning of organized labour in Coimbatore when a local lawyer, N.S. Ramaswamy Iyengar, established the Coimbatore Labour Union soon after his return from the Amritsar session of Congress (Murphy, 1981; 72). From 1926 onwards there was an increase in the number of workers who came under the wings of Indian Trade Union Act of 1926 (Chinnadurai, 1982: 18). Coimbatore has its own tradition of trade union movement. Because of the rapid industrial development and a large population employed in various types of industries, it was decided, to carry out a study of workers' unions of Coimbatore.

Selection of Industries: As we have mentioned earlier there are different types of industry like textile industry, engineering industry, service industry and so on. Because of the primacy of textile industry, it has attracted the attention of researchers. Scholars like Ramaswamy (1977) Uma Ramaswamy (1983) and Murphy (1981) have conducted research on the textile industry and its workers. Also scholars like Berna (1960), and Palaniswamy (1984) conducted

research on entrepreneurship. As mentioned earlier, in Coimbatore, the engineering industry occupies the second position in terms of employment, being next to the textile industry. However, few studies have been conducted on the participation of workers in their unions in the engineering industry of Coimbatore. The present study of workers and their unions in the engineering industry fills up a gap in the existing literature. Because of this diversity among the engineering industries it was difficult to study the workers and their unions in all the engineering industries. Thus, industrial units manufacturing automobile components were selected for the purpose of the present study. As we have mentioned, the objective of this study is to make a comparative study of single-union and multi-union factories within the automobile industry. A pilot study was carried out to identify the representative units for the purpose of the present study. Information regarding the automobile industry and trade unions was gathered. On the basis of the findings of the pilot study, two units were selected. One unit has a single union and the other has multiple unions. The first unit, Bimetal Bearings, specializes in manufacturing metal bearings for automobiles. The second unit, Thomson Radiators\* specializes in

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\* Thomson Radiators is a pseudonym of the factory that was selected for the study. One of the senior personnel managers wanted the name of the unit to be kept secret. Hence, the pseudonym.



manufacturing radiators for automobiles. The two units are comparable in terms of the number of workers employed by the two units. Bimetal Bearings employs around 420 workers and Thomson Radiators employs around 320 workers. Each of the two units has several sister concerns. Bimetal Bearings is one of the 22 units of the Simpson group of companies. Thomson Radiators has 14 sister concerns.

Selection of Respondents: The next step was the selection of the respondents for the study. Since we are studying the members' participation in unions, we selected only those, who were members of the unions.

As mentioned above, the single-union factory, Bimetal Bearings, which is one of the units of the Simpson group of companies, employed around 420 workers (in 1984) excluding the casual labourers. All the temporary and permanent workers were enrolled in the union. As the first step towards selection of respondents from the single union unit, the personnel manager of the plant was approached to obtain permission to carry out the research. But the personnel manager was apprehensive about the study on the grounds that such a study might create unrest among the workers of his unit. In spite of repeated visits the personnel manager was not willing to allow the researcher to carry out the study in the factory premises. The personnel manager resorted to the strategy of asking the researcher to visit



again and again but did not give permission to the researcher to carry out his study on some plea or the other. In fact during one of the visits the personnel manager said that he himself, would give all the data on behalf of workers and there was no need for the researcher to meet the workers individually.

When the researcher found that the personnel manager was not cooperative he decided to approach the union leaders, who would facilitate contacts with the members of the union. The researcher approached a union leader, with whom he was acquainted in connection with an earlier study, for help to carry out the study. He was forthcoming and introduced the researcher to other group leaders and workers. The group leaders supplied the researcher with valid union membership list.

In the single union industry almost all the permanent employees have membership in the union. The membership subscription is deducted from the monthly wages by the administration and is transferred to the union office. That is why the union membership list had 420 members including workers as well as staff. The staff members were excluded from the study and only temporary and permanent workers were included. In the single union 20 per cent of the total population was selected. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select the respondents with the help of the

membership list and every 5th name was selected for the study. This yielded 84 names.

It took nearly two weeks for the investigator to establish rapport with workers. After selecting the names through the membership list, the residential addresses were collected with the help of the leaders. Workers were interviewed at their residence. Data were collected from workers at the place of their residence because the personnel manager did not allow the author to carry out the study within the factory premises. Due to certain reasons like non-availability of some respondents, inability to locate the residential addresses of few respondents, the investigator was able to interview 80 respondents out of 84 from the single union factory.

Table 2.1: Details of sample size from single and multiple-union industrial units.

Industrial unit	Unions	Total Members	Total no. of Respondents	Percentage
Bimetal Bearings	SESU	420	84	20
Thomson Radiators	CITU	49	24	50
	AITUC	50	25	50
	LPF	90	30	35

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Thomson Radiators, the multiple-union factory employed around 320 workers (in 1984) including the trainees. The researcher approached the personnel manager. He was pleased to help the author in his research and permitted him to meet the workers in the factory premises. On the first day the personnel manager introduced the researcher to all the union leaders in his factory. The personnel manager called the union leaders to his office to introduce them to the author. The author noticed that none of the worker leaders sat on a chair but kept standing during the entire meeting. The personnel manager did not ask them to sit either. This reflects the hierarchy and the authority structure in the factory. This indicates that the workers do not interact with the managerial personnel on equal terms.

Thomson Radiators had four unions at the time of study. But only three unions were included in the present study. The reasons are: (a) the fourth union had emerged just a month before the author began his study at the unit; and (b) it had very few members (19 in all). Because the union had not acquired a formal shape, the workers from the fourth union were not interviewed. The three unions included in the study are: the CITU, the AITUC, and the LPF. The CITU union claimed that it had 80 members, but verified membership was 49, the AITUC claimed 90 members but the verified members were 50 and finally the LPF claimed 120 members but verified membership was 90. The fourth union affiliated to ALU had

19 members in total.

In the multiple-union factory also, the membership lists were gathered from the respective unions. Samples of different sizes were drawn from the three unions. It was necessary to draw samples of comparable size. In view of comparability, from the CITU and the AITUC 50 per cent samples were drawn. This yielded 25 names in each of the two unions. Since the LPF was comparatively larger than the other two unions it was decided, to draw 35 per cent sample. This gave 30 names. Total number of workers from Thomson Radiators included in the study is 79. Already we have noted that we have selected 80 respondents from the single-union unit. Thus we have more or less equal and comparable size of samples from the two units.

The respondents at multi-union plant were interviewed at the factory itself. The personnel manager provided the researcher with a room in the factory office so that the interviews with respondents could be conducted without the intervention of others. But within a few days the investigator learned that the respondents hesitated to come to the room alone to give interviews. Slowly the investigator gave up the idea of sitting in the room. The author went and met the respondents at their work place.

Each interview in the multi-union plant, took 45 to 60 minutes. The investigator conducted the interviews in this

plant between 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The average number of workers whom the author could interview in a day was four. Some respondents were willing to discuss at great length about their union activities. The researcher took their residential addresses and met them at their residence. Field work for the present study was carried out during 1984-85. It took about seven months to complete the data collection.

### Nature and Techniques of Data Collection:

#### (a) Nature of Data:

The data collected consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the sample of 159 workers selected for the study by using an interview schedule.

Along with the primary data, the secondary data were also collected on history and dynamics of unionism, factional conflicts, union election etc. These data were collected from the following sources: (a) union publications such as periodicals and occasional reports; (b) pamphlets released by factional groups among workers; and (c) local news papers.

#### (b) Techniques of Data Collection:

Interview schedule was the major tool for collecting data in our study. The author conducted the interview with the help of structured interview schedule. Most of the questions were structured and some of them were open-ended.

But always flexibility was maintained to incorporate any additional information given by workers on a particular question. The schedule was administered in Tamil language.

A word about the interview schedule. It consisted of questions regarding respondent's personal, social and economic backgrounds, questions regarding nature of members' participation in union activities, union-management relations and inter-union relations. The schedule also contained questions related to the structure of the unions. That is, questions like, whether the union gave workers freedom to participate in decision-making process, whether the union conducted elections regularly, etc.

Although the interview schedule was administered only to the 159 respondents selected by the sampling procedure mentioned above, the investigator met several workers not included in the sample and discussed with them about their unions. The information thus collected supplemented the data collected from 159 workers.

### (c) Data Analysis:

The responses obtained through the interview schedules were coded by using a code procedure. The data were analysed by making use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in computer. Depending on the nature of variables and the levels of measurements that could be utilised, statistical techniques, like frequencies, cross-tabulations

In the multi-union factory it took around 10 days to establish rapport with the workers. After that the researcher started interviews with the workers at their work place. During the initial stages the author had problems like the presence of other workers around the respondents. As a result of this the respondents hesitated to give their frank opinions. The investigator explained to the other workers that the researcher would come to them also and they should give information when they were contacted.

Except a few respondents every one cooperated with the author in conducting the study. Especially the CITU union president wanted to accompany the investigator during the interview times. But the researcher explained to him that it was not necessary. He was not convinced and argued that after all the respondents were his own union members. He went to the extent of suspecting that the author might pass on information to the management. Some leaders asked about the utility of the study. The researcher had to tackle these questions in a way that no confrontation took place.

#### Indices and Measurement of Participation:

Participation in trade union activities is a part of industrial behaviour of the members and it is not an attitude. Participation may vary from individual to individual or union to union. Some investigators have attempted to measure the degree of participation by assigning weightage to a series of



items. Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958) have used six items. Miller et al., (1965) indicated four items to measure the participation of workers in their unions. Sheth (1969) has used seven items. Sharan (1978) has used four items, Sinha (1983) has used 12 items and Joseph (1985) divided the union activities into 7 items to measure the extent of members' participation in union activities. In our study we have selected 25 items. These 25 items are grouped in two sets. One set of items reflect participation during normal situation and another set of items reflect participation during crisis situation. The two sets of items are listed below.

#### I. Participation During Normal Situation :

1. Paying subscription promptly,
2. Defaulted from the union due to over dues,
3. Attending GBMS,
4. Attending special GBMS,
5. Asking questions in the union meetings,
6. Answering questions raised by others in union meetings,
7. Dissenting with other's view,
8. Making motions during union meetings,
9. Bringing grievances to meetings,
10. Positions held in the past 5 years,
11. Holding position in the union office currently,
12. Visiting union office,



13. Reading union notices displayed on notice boards,
14. Helping in enlisting new members,
15. Convassing for union election,
16. Casting the vote in union election.

## II. Participation during Crisis Situation:

1. Participation in preparing demand charter,
2. Participation in negotiation with management,
3. Participation in demonstrations,
4. Convassing for strike,
5. Participation in picketing,
6. Participation in gherao,
7. Participation in go-slow,
8. Rejecting overtime,
9. Rejecting incentive production.

These are the 25 items in total used in this study to measure the extent of members' participation in union activities during normal and crisis situation.

## Measurement of Participation:

As we have mentioned earlier some authors (Tannenbaum and Kahn, 1958; Sheth, 1969; Sharma 1971; Sharan, 1978; and Sinha, 1983) have attempted to measure the degree of participation by assigning weightage to a series of items. These items are treated as indices. In our study we have identified a series of items which are mentioned above.

The respondents were asked to answer whether they have participated in each of the activities mentioned in the list during a given period of time. Depending on the response of a worker we have assigned value 1 to the positive response of an item and zero value to the negative response. In the case of some item/activity which occurs more frequently, the item was given weightage depending on the frequency of the occurrence of the activity. For example, an item like GBM was given weightage of 6 points because the maximum number of GBMS conducted by any union was 6 in a period of one year. Attendance in each GBM is given weightage of one point and non-attendance/absence is given zero point. That is a worker who has attended all the 6 GBMS will obtain the score of 6 points whereas the worker who has not attended any of the GBM will get zero point. In the case of items like visiting the union office the frequency of visiting the office ranges from never to more than once a week through only when he has specific problem, only when the union holds meeting, once in a month, twice in a month, and once in a week. In this case, a worker who never visited the union office during given period of time would get a zero point and a worker who visits more than once a week will get 6 points. If a worker scores positive points on all the items he obtains the maximum score. If a worker scores negative points on all the items his score will be zero. It means these scores, the workers

of a union can obtain range from zero to the maximum score. According to this method the maximum score that a worker in the CITU and the AITUC unions in our study can get is 31; the maximum score that a worker in the LPF union can get is 32; and the maximum score that a worker in the SESU union can get is 24.

In order to categorize different levels of participation, depending on the scores obtained by the workers, they are divided into three groups. This grouping is obtained by dividing the total score that a worker of a union can obtain into three equal interval groups. In the case of the CITU union in which a worker can get maximum score of 31 is divided into three groups. The score range of the first group would be between 0 to 10.31; the score range of the second group would be between 10.34 to 20.67; and the score range of the third group would be between 20.68 to 31. In our study the members whose scores fall in the first group are considered to be low level participants; members whose scores fall in the second group are medium level participants; and the members whose scores fall in the third group are high level participants.

The cut-off points dividing the three levels of participation in the four unions in our study are presented in table 2.2. The cut-off points differ for four unions because of the differences in the total number of activities

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in the union.

Table 2.2: Cut-off Points for three levels of Participation in the unions under study

Units and Unions	Maximum Score	Low	Medium	High
Bimetal Bearings SESU	24	0-8	9-16	17-24.0
Thomson Radiators CITU	31	0-10.33	10.34-20.67	20.68-31.0
AITUC	31	0-10.33	10.34-20.67	20.68-31.0
LPF	32	0-10.66	10.67-21.33	21.34-32.0

## CHAPTER III

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE WORKERS

The profile of workers is important from the point of view of their participation in industrial activities in general and their participation in their trade unions in particular. In this chapter we shall present the socio-economic background of the workers and we shall relate their background and their participation later.

Modern industry began to develop in India in the decade 1850-60. The first cotton textile mill was established in Bombay in the year 1853 (Karnik, 1966: 14). Industrialization was a novel experience to India in the 19th century. Industrialization brought about changes in the social, political and economic life of Indian society. Several social scientists have focussed attention on the nature of industrialization, entrepreneurial groups, role of State, and the characteristics of industrial work force in India since the beginning of industrialization. For the purpose of our study we shall look at the evolution of industrial working class in India.

#### Characteristics of Indian Industrial Labour Force

Among the scholars who studied the early industrialization process Buchanan has made an important contribution. To him, as in the most industrial countries, it has been the

lowest and the most unfortunate class of the people who have provided labour for the Indian factories. People accustomed to simple agricultural, menial service or handicraft, find the discipline of a factory particularly irksome and only when very hard pressed will they give themselves up to it. Usually workers have come as temporary residents, leaving their families and other relatives behind. Since half their economic and nearly all their family interest lies in the village, these workers never settle down to make the most of an urban occupation (Buchanan, 1966: 294).

More or less the same conclusion was drawn by Myers who studied the early industrial relations situation in India. Myers (1960: 89) concludes that the development of an industrial labour force in India was possible because pressure on the land forced villagers to seek work in the expanding industrial cities. This exodus, however, was largely a push, facilitated by recruiters who used various devices to entice people to come to the mines, mills, and factories. Living and working conditions in the cities were on the whole, extremely bad; and this reverse push from the city kept many industrial workers in a 'partially committed' state which persists to the present day. Family, religious, and economic ties with the village remain.

The pressure of population in villages had grown immensely and there was considerable increase of unemployment, poverty and misery. Cottage and handicraft industries had died, leaving millions of artisans and craftsman without any means of livelihood. They had to leave their villages and migrate to cities in search of jobs (Karnik, 1966: 18). The early migrants in India who joined the industrial centres were not independent farmers but socially and economically disabled groups habitually inured to exceedingly unfavourable economic and social circumstances. They migrated to cities in search of employment only under extremely difficult circumstances, namely, famines. We find that the two decades i.e., 1872 - 81 and 1891-1901 in which the movement of rural population towards towns was most marked, were both decades in which there were widespread famines in India. It is no wonder then that these rural migrants were pushed, not pulled, to the city (Sharma, 1963: 14-15).

The early studies show that the industrial labour force mainly consisted of rural small peasants, landless groups, artisans and members of lower castes. They had maintained their contacts with their rural communities and were bound by their caste affiliations which influenced the nature of working class and its participation in industry. These features of the industrial working class made some authors comment that the Indian industrial worker is not committed



to an industrial way of life.

Later studies conducted in the 60's and 70's portrayed a new picture. Morris (1960) in his study of Bombay labour force and Jamshedpur found that the data did not demonstrate any serious lack of commitment and that lack of commitment among workers often arose from the employer's interest in unstable employees or lack of economic opportunity. He even rejected the conclusion of lack of continuous supply of labour. Lambert (1963) studied the process of recruitment and commitment of workers in different technological settings in a moderately industrialized urban community. Workers' commitment in industry varied according to the degree of compatibility between traditional norms and the norms imposed by the technology.

The structure and social background of industrial labour force has undergone change after independence. The Report of the National Commission on Labour (1969: VII) observed that over the last twenty years, the trend towards stabilization of industrial labour has strengthened. A worker today is far more urban in taste and outlook than his predecessor. The idyllic notion of a village nexus has receded to the background. A vast majority of the workers in cities is committed to factory employment. In older industries a second or even third generation of workers has emerged. A self-generating working class with its roots

in the industrial environment in which a worker is born and bred is growing in strength.

Sharma (1979) concluded from his study of workers of automobile industries that a significant proportion of the workers is drawn from urban areas, most of them have had some formal education, the proportion of upper castes among the Hindu workers is quite high. From Sharma's study it is found that modern industrial workers are not like their counterpart of the early period of industrialization. More recently, Harriss (1982) studied the urban economy as a whole in Coimbatore and concluded that the kind of industrialization which is taking place in Coimbatore has not gone very far towards breaking down social divisions and ideologies which were developed in earlier epochs of production. To him, the caste, kith and kin relation still influence the entry into industrial employment.

Recent studies suggest that at present the industrial workers in India, except in the traditional industries like the cotton textiles and jute industries, are: (1) urban-born, (2) have vocational training, (3) are educated, (4) are second generation industrial workers, and (5) are from diverse caste groups. The present day industrial production process, based on modern technology, requires qualified men to meet the demands. We may say that although the demographic, educational, and ethnic profile has changed, still the

traditional institutions do seem to play a role in urban-industrial centres, especially in recruitment.

This will help us in trying to understand the background of workers in our study in the light of the findings of other studies mentioned above. The following aspects are included in the analysis: (a) age, (b) caste, (c) education, (d) civil status, (e) religion, (f) rural/urban background (g) migration status, (h) experience, (i) job-security, (j) political sympathy, (k) income; and (l) inter-generational occupational mobility in the respondent's family.

#### Age Composition of the Workers:

Composition of age determines whether the work force is young or old. If a factory has a major proportion of young workers then it has an inexperienced work force. If it has a major proportion of old workers then after a certain period of time the industry has to face the problem of recruiting suitable new hands on a large scale. This will lead to the scarcity of experienced workers. Hence, the age structure of the work force should be balanced between young and old workers. Lambert (1963: 26) who studied the Western Indian industrial workers found that their median age is 32.4 years and he quotes Niehoff's study of Kanpur factory labour which is 30 years. We shall investigate in our study the age composition of work force.

Table 3.1 : Age structure of Workers in the Study

Sl.No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	21 - 25	11	6.9
2	26 - 30	42	26.4
3	31 - 35	36	22.6
4	36 - 40	24	15.1
5	41 - 45	32	20.2
6	46 - 50	10	6.3
7	51 - 55	4	2.5
Total		159	100.0*

\* Percentage is rounded off to 100.

In our study the minimum age is 21 and the maximum age is 55. Average age is 35.27 years. We have classified the age group into young i.e., 21 to 35; middle age i.e. 36-50; and old age i.e., 51 to 55. We find that 55.9 per cent respondents are below the age of 35 years, 41.5 per cent workers are in the age group of 36 to 50 and finally only 2.5 per cent workers are above 51 years old. The study finds that the majority of the workers are young and middle aged.

### Caste Groups among the Workers in the Study:

We have seen from the survey of literature that caste in India affected the supply of labour force in the early period of industrialization. Morris quotes (1978: 177) from the earlier studies that it was to the Harijans and displaced village artisans in whose cases powerful push factors were in operation, that the factory had any attraction. In contrast to this, the recent studies (Lambert 1966: 36; Sharma 1979:8 ; Rao, 1972: 49) found that different caste group workers were found among the industrial labour force.

Generally caste is defined as an endogamous group. However, for purposes of our study we have combined some allied endogamous groups into one caste group, for example, Kammavar Naidu, Baliya Naidu, Naicker, all referred to as Naidu. The term Gounder includes sub-castes also.

Table 3.2: Caste Composition of the Workers

Sl. No.	Caste	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Brahmin	11	6.9
2.	Pillai	10	6.3
3.	Mudaliar	7	4.4
4.	Chettiar	9	5.7
5.	Naidu	18	11.3
6.	Konar	4	2.5

contd....

(Table 3.2 contd.....)

7.	Thevar	6	3.8
8.	Asari	13	8.2
9.	Gounder	16	10.1
10.	Nadar	3	1.9
11.	Singh	1	0.6
12.	Reddiar	1	0.6
13.	Rajput	3	1.9
14.	Vanniar	4	2.6
15.	Pandaram	2	1.3
16.	Nair	4	2.6
17.	Panickar	1	0.6
18.	Eluvan	2	1.3
19.	Adi- Dravida	10	6.3
20.	Other Religion	32	20.1
21	Missing	2	1.3
Total		159	100.0

The present study suggests that the representation of Brahmin caste is only 6.9 per cent. The scheduled castes' (Adi-Dravida) representation is only 6.3 per cent. This study reveals that the representation of Harijans is low and this indicates that the Harijans are not over-represented in the industrial jobs. But it is the non-Brahmin local high

castes which are in the majority.

This trend is reflected in other studies also which point out that all caste groups have been taking up industrial employment. Politically and economically, the dominant caste groups in the region of Coimbatore are the Kammavar Naidus and the Kongu Vellala Gounders (Harriss, 1982b: 994). The study has revealed that some local dominant caste groups have benefited disproportionately from the industrial employment. From our study we have found that the representation of Naidu caste is 11.3 per cent and representation of Gounder caste is 10.1 per cent. In total the representation of dominant caste groups is 21.4 per cent which is more than any other caste groups' representation individually. Some members of these groups are entrepreneurs who established industries and preferred to recruit members of their own caste.

This finding leads to another question and that is what will be the future of members of other caste groups as well as the future of Harijans in industrial employment? First of all, factory employment in the modern world is considered to be one of the gainful means of earning. Secondly, the supply of the labour force is more than the demand. Because of the shrinking or stagnant employment opportunities, the dominant caste groups exercise their power to enter into the labour market. On the other hand, the



weaker sections, like the scheduled castes are being eliminated from the industrial employment systematically. Harriss (1982a: 48) who studied the Coimbatore labour market arrived at similar conclusions.

The following conclusions emerge from the analysis of caste background of the workers in our study: (a) modern industrial labour force consists mostly of non-Brahmin and non-Harijan caste groups; (b) dominant caste groups have greater access to industrial employment; and (c) the representation of lower caste groups in industrial employment is relatively low.

#### Educational Background:

With diversification of industries which use different types and levels of technology a certain minimum education is required to gain one's entry into industry. Further, urban industrial employment requires certain skills which are provided by vocational education. Education also plays a role in occupational and social mobility. The studies conducted in the last two decades such as (Lambert, 1963: 29; Sharma, 1979: 8; and Harriss, 1982b: 994) observed that the Indian industrial worker is no more illiterate. He is educated. We shall analyse the educational level of the industrial workers, in our study.

Table 3.3: Educational level of the workers in the study

Sl.No.	Education	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Illiterate:	2	1.3
2.	1 - 5	11	6.8
3.	6 - 8	34	21.4
4.	9 - 11	102	64.2
5.	PUC	3	1.9
6.	Degree	6	3.8
7.	Post-graduate	1	0.6
Total		159	100.0

In this study it is found that only 2 respondents out of 159 were illiterate and the rest were educated. Out of the 159 respondents, 6.8 per cent have primary school level education (1st to 5th standard) another 85.6 per cent respondents have secondary school level education (6th to 11th standard). Those who have had college level education constitute 6.3 per cent. The author noted during the course of interviews that a good number of respondents could speak English. Our study reveals that industrial workers are mostly educated and some of them have college level education. It shows that in modern India, the industry is in a position to choose the educated members of the society.

Further, it is found that some of the workers have received vocational training from ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes) and some of the workers are diploma holders who have received technical training (25.2 per cent ITI and 3.1 per cent diploma). This finding shows that the modern industry lays emphasis on recruiting the technically qualified hands for industrial jobs.

#### Civil Status:

Civil status is one of the important aspects of the labour force which affects the industrial behaviour of the workers. It is found from the present study that 78 per cent of the respondents were married and 22 per cent were unmarried.

#### Religious Background:

From the review of the literature we come to know that during the early period of industrialization, members of lower caste Hindus were prominent in the industrial employment (Buchanan, 1966: 294; Myers, 1960: 89). But some scholars (Lambert, 1963: 33-4; Sharma, 1979: 8) noted that the Hindus constitute the bulk of the industrial work force in India. Our study also shows that the majority of the workers are Hindus.

Table 3.4: Religious Composition of Workers

Sl.No.	Religion	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Hindu	127	79.9
2.	Christian	27	17.0
3.	Muslim	5	3.1
Total		159	100.0

Table 3.4 shows that the majority (79.9 per cent) of the workers are Hindus; 17.0 per cent workers are Christians and finally 3.1 per cent are Muslims. From this study it is found that the Hindus no longer look down at the industrial occupation as it was believed. On the contrary, workers from the Hindu religion constitute the majority of the work force. While this is the general picture, there are, however, certain industries where Muslims are employed in large numbers. For instance, it is a general observation that in the leather industry proportionately more Muslims are employed than workers from other religions.

#### Rural-Urban Background:

We have seen that the earlier studies (Buchanan 1966: 294; Myers, 1960: 89) found that the Indian labour force which traditionally hailed from rural areas maintained constant

contact with the villages. The rural nexus is one of the factors which hindered adjustment to urban-industrial life and led to lack of commitment. However, the recent studies (Girbert, 1972: 190; and Sharma, 1979: 6) found that more than half of the respondents were city-born. In the present study, data on place of birth of the workers and data on where they had lived for the greater part of their lives were collected. The data are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Place of Birth and the Place where Workers have lived mostly.

Sl. No.	Place	Place of birth		Place where lived mostly	
		Freque- ncy	Percenta- ge	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Village	53	33.3	31	19.5
2.	Town	28	17.6	26	16.3
3.	City	78	49.1	102	64.2
Total		159	100.0	159	100.0

Analysis of data in Table 3.5 shows that, only 33.3 per cent of the respondents reported that they were born in villages and rest of them are urban born i.e., in towns and cities. A considerable proportion of the workers i.e., 49.1 per cent were born in cities. This indicates that workers are predominantly urban-born.

Further Table 3.5 shows that only 19.5 per cent respondents spent the greater part of their life in villages and 80.5 per cent of the respondents said that they lived in towns and cities for the greater part of their lives. We find that there is a difference between the workers who were born in villages and those who spent their lives in cities mostly. That is, in the former group, 33.3 per cent of the respondents reported that their place of birth was the village but some of them had migrated to towns and cities in their early childhood and had started living there. That is why the representation of those who spent the greater part of their lives in villages comes down to 19.5 per cent and that of those who spent most of their lives in towns and cities goes up to 64.2 per cent. Whereas the proportion of workers who were born in towns and spent most of their lives in towns and cities is more or less the same, the proportion of workers who were born in villages but spent the major part of lives in cities was large. That is, their migration in childhood was directly to a city.

From this study we can conclude that most of the workers are from cities. Now the question is why the urban-born workers are in a majority? It is very clear that the modern industry in India has been emphasising on recruiting educated, technically qualified workers. In India facilities for education - liberal as well as technical are concentrated in towns and cities. The urban population obviously

takes advantage of these facilities but the rural-population cannot take advantage of these facilities like the urban-populations. Over a period of time, the rural population has been losing ground in its competition with the urban-born population.

#### Migration Status:

The data on place of birth indicated that some workers had migrated to cities in their childhood or adolescence. To find out the place of origin and the distance involved in their migration, data on the taluk, district, and State of the origin of the workers were collected.

Table 3.6: Distance of Migration

Sl. No.	Place of origin	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Coimbatore city and suburbs	52	32.7
2.	Coimbatore Taluk	15	9.4
3.	Coimbatore District	9	5.7
4.	Other Districts of Tamil Nadu	62	39.0
5.	From other states of India	21	13.2
Total		159	100.0

Table 3.6 shows that about one third of the respondents are from Coimbatore city or suburbs; another 9.4 per cent



from Coimbatore taluk and 5.7 per cent are from Coimbatore district. Combined together, workers drawn from Coimbatore district constitute 47.8 per cent. That is, nearly half of the work force is drawn from local areas. A considerable proportion of the work force i.e., 39.0 per cent came from the other districts of Tamil Nadu and the rest 13.2 per cent of the work force is drawn from neighbouring States like Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. Our study shows that Coimbatore district supplies nearly half of the work force. It indicates that the industry in Coimbatore is able to draw a substantial proportion of labour force from within the region.

Experience of the Workers in the Industrial Units in which they are Working:

The length of service of the workers indicates whether the factory/industry is able to retain the labour force in service, over a relatively long period of time. In this study, information was collected from the workers regarding their length of service in the present organization.

Table 3.7: Length of Service with present organisation

Sl.No.	Experience in years	Frequency	Percentage
1.	1 - 5	20	12.6
2.	6 - 10	49	30.8
3.	11 - 15	20	12.6

contd....

(Table 3.7 contd.....)

4.	16 - 20	32	20.1
5.	21 - 25	33	20.8
6.	26 - 30	5	3.1
Total		159	100.0

It is found that the length of the service in the present concern ranges from 3 to 28 years and the average is 14 years. Table 3.7 shows that only 12.6 per cent workers have less than 5 years experience in the present concern. More than half of the workers have experience ranging from 11 to 30 years. The findings indicate that the two industrial units in our study have been able to retain the labour force for a relatively long time. That is, labour turnover is not very significant. Workers continue to work for the same employer for considerably long periods of time.

#### Work Status of the Workers:

Work status refers to whether a worker is permanent employee or temporary/casual employee. One's status as permanent or temporary worker seems to influence the degree of participation of workers in trade union activities. In our study the majority i.e., 81.1 per cent of the workers, are permanent employees and only 18.9 per cent are temporary employees.

### Political Leanings of the Industrial Workers:

Political leanings of the industrial workers influences their participation in trade union activities. In our study data on political affiliation/sympathy of workers were collected. Workers were asked to indicate with which political party they were affiliated or had sympathy. It indicates the ideological inclinations of the workers.

Table 3.8: Political Sympathy of the Workers in the Study

Sl. No.	Party	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Congress - I	20	12.6
2.	Janta	5	3.1
3.	CPI - M	16	10.1
4.	CPI	7	4.4
5.	DMK	56	35.2
6.	AIADMK	19	11.9
7.	No party	36	22.6
Total		159	100.0

Table 3.8 shows that the majority of the workers are sympathizers of DMK followed by the two Communist parties (CPI and CPI-M). The Congress- I Party claims, the sympathies of 12.6 per cent of workers and 11.9 per cent workers subscribe to the ideology of the AIADMK.

Income of the Work Force from their Current Occupation:

Income also is an important factor which plays a vital role in the industrial behaviour of the work force. In our study we have collected information on income from the present occupation, income from land, business and house rent etc. Income of the workers from the present occupation ranges from Rs. 300 to 2400 per month. Average income is Rs. 1085.

Table 3.9: Income levels of the Workers per month

Sl. No.	Income in Rupees	Frequency	Percentage
1.	300 - 600	29	18.2
2.	601 - 900	9	5.7
3.	901 - 1200	67	42.1
4.	1201 - 1500	43	27.0
5.	1501 - 1800	9	5.7
6.	1801 - 2100	1	0.6
7.	2101 - 2400	1	0.6
Total		159	100.0

Earlier in this chapter we had seen that around 18 per cent of the workers are temporary employees, and here we find 18.2 per cent of the workers get wages between Rs. 300 to 600 per month. It is this group which constitutes

the majority of the temporary workers. It indicates the income differentials between temporary workers and permanent workers. Workers whose wages are above 600 Rs. are, in most of the cases, permanent workers. The industry always has a tendency to recruit certain group of workers on a temporary basis and keep them as temporary workers for a relatively longer period, so that it can pay low wages, and not extend the benefits that it extends to permanent workers. In our study the tendency to keep the workers as temporary hands for a considerably long time was observed in single union factory. It is also noted that for the same job wages are being paid differently depending on the status of the worker i.e., temporary or permanent. This trend is observed elsewhere also (Menon, 1985: 144).

Apart from the income from their occupations some workers also have access to income from land, business and rent. It is found that 29 workers possessed lands individually or jointly with family members, and the income from land ranged from Rs. 600 to 10,000 per year. The average income from the land is Rs. 724/-. Fifteen workers were drawing income from petty business, workshops etc. The income from business of these workers ranged from Rs. 500 to 25,000 per year and the average income is Rs. 764 per annum. Finally 21 workers were drawing income from house rent which ranged from Rs. 120 to 9900 per annum and the average income from the rent is Rs. 408.

### Inter-generational Occupational Mobility among Workers:

The National Commission on Labour (1969: VII) observed that the present day workers are second or even third generation with the industry. We shall investigate inter-generational occupational mobility among workers. This would indicate how many workers in our study are first generation industrial workers and how many second generation workers. Workers were asked to specify the occupations of their fathers.

Table 3.10: Inter-generational Occupational Mobility

Sl. No.	Father's Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Mill, factory	35	22.01
2.	Service Occupation	45	28.30
3.	Self Employed	28	17.62
4.	Business	10	6.28
5.	Cultivator	7	4.41
6.	Agri-Labourer	34	21.38
Total		159	100.0

The occupation of the fathers is divided into (a) industrial occupation, (b) urban service occupation - clerical service, sales representatives, etc. (c) self-employment (tailoring, laundry etc.), (d) petty business

(small shops), (e) cultivators and agricultural labourers. It is found that 50.31 per cent labourers are from the families which were engaged in urban- industrial occupations. Another 23.90 per cent workers are from families which were engaged in petty business. Finally 25.79 per cent workers are drawn from agricultural background.

We have noted earlier that nearly 50 per cent of the workers are urban-born and their urban background is connected with the urban-based occupations of their fathers. This leads us to conclude that the sons of the urban-industrial workers have greater propensity to take up industrial occupations.

To recapitulate, workers in our study are mostly below middle age have higher education and a substantial proportion have technical education. It is found from the present study that the industrial jobs are no longer confined to Harijans and other lower castes as it used to be in the earlier stages of industrial development. Today the non-Brahmin high caste groups are increasingly taking to industrial employment. In our study particularly the dominant castes in the region seem to exercise their influence to get into the organized industry for their employment. The lower caste groups tend to be excluded systematically from the industrial employment. In future, the members of the lower castes would be forced to seek



employment in the unorganized sector characterized by low wages, irregular employment and lack of job-security.

Our study also supports the evidence that industrial labour is mostly from urban background. From the analysis of migration status of the workers it is found that the Coimbatore area is able to meet most of the demands for industrial labour. From our study it is found that work force is stable. More than half of the work force has spent more than 11 years in the service of the same organization. This suggests that the Indian industrial labour force has attained stability. Further, it is found that the sons of the industrial employees have a greater tendency to enter into industrial occupations than those from the agricultural families or business families.

Before we analyse the levels of participation of workers in their unions, we shall briefly sketch the evolution of union-management relations in the industrial units in our study in the next chapter. This will be useful in understanding the dynamics of unionism and the structure and organization of the unions in the two units. We shall be able to place the workers' participation in the context of the tradition of unionism that has evolved in the two units.

## CHAPTER IV

### HISTORY OF UNIONISM IN THE TWO INDUSTRIAL UNITS

In this chapter we shall try to analyse the history of union-management relations in the industrial units under study. We shall examine the dynamics of union-management relations over a period of time. We shall also see how the union-management relations are affected by the political events that occur outside the industrial arena. We shall suggest how the workers' perceptions and participation are affected by the changing relations between union and the management. Members of industrial working class at a given point of time are heirs to certain historical antecedents in the realm of industrial relations. This holds in the case of workers in a particular industry also. They are heirs to working class movements in the society in general and the industrial relations in a particular industry. The attitude to and actual behaviour in their organizations at a given point of time are influenced by the pattern of interaction between the management and the workers' union on the one hand and the interaction between the union leadership and the workers on the other that emerges over a period of time in a particular industry.

Lipset and his associates (1956: 17) realized that sociological studies of contemporary groups and institutions have been notoriously deficient in historical background.

They have argued that generally the sociologist directs himself rather to the question of why given patterns persist, than to the question of how they come to be in the first place, a problem he leaves to the historian. In the Indian context Sheth (1969), Mamkoottam (1982), and Sharan (1985) realized the impact of history of union-management relations on members' participation in union activities but paid only lip service to it. Thus, cross-sectional studies at a given point of time are inadequate to understand social phenomena such as the union dynamics. Therefore it becomes necessary to study the union-management relations, inter-union relations, and internal affairs of union over a period of time to understand why a particular union is more active than the other unions and inturn why the members of a particular union are more active than the members of the other unions.

Our main objective here is to trace the following things:

1. Under what socio-economic and political conditions unions emerged in the units under study;
2. Evolution of union-management relations.
3. Conditions under which rival unions emerge in an industry

and pattern of inter-union relations over a period of time and its implications for members' involvements in union activities; and

4. Implications of pattern of union-management relations as it developed over a period of time and its impact on inter-union relations, on internal affairs of the particular union and, in turn, on members' participation in union activities.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section I deals with the history and dynamics of unionism in single-union plant and section II deals with the multiple unions plant. The units under study were established at different points of time. The single-union plant under study (Bimetal Bearings) which came into existence in the year 1961, is one of the several units of the Simpson group of companies. The Simpson group of companies were started 125 years ago. So, the history of unionism in the Bimetal Bearings is closely related to the history of unionism in the Simpson group of companies. Thomson Radiators, the second unit in our study, was started in the year 1957 and also has several sister concerns. The head quarters of Bimetal Bearings is located at Madras whereas that of Thomson Radiators is located at Coimbatore. In our analysis we shall first examine the history of unionism in Bimetal Bearings and then we shall look at the history of unionism in Thomson Radiators.

## I

Unionism in Simpson Group of Companies

Simpson group of companies which employs around 15,000 workers in twenty-two units is one of the largest private industrial undertakings in Madras. According to the information given by the management, 125 years ago, Sir Simpson, an English man started the enterprise. Originally it was a business enterprise engaged in importing and assembling of automobile components. Later, A.C. Lund, W.W. Ladan and R.P. Read joined the enterprise and managed it jointly.

When A.C. Lund, W.W. Ladan and R.P. Read were on the Board of Directors of the company, Shri Anantharamakrishnan worked as company secretary. He looked after the financial division of the company too. During the out break of the second World War, the Board of Directors left for England leaving the company under the supervision of Shri Anantha Ramakrishnan. According to our respondents, when the Board of Directors returned to India after the war, they were satisfied with the performance of Shri Anantharamakrishnan. As a token of their gratitude they offered him a share and included him as a member on the Board of Directors. It is said with this share Shri Anantharamakrishnan bought more shares and at last gained all the units of the Simpson group

of companies by the mid 1950's.

Before 1955, when Simpson unit was engaged in assembling the automobile components, it recruited workers through informal methods. It was said that those who were in need of work approached the factory every day. They were hired from the factory gate as casual labourers. This was a form of exploitation by the then management as they did not confirm the workers who were paid measly wages with barely any facilities. Due to Second World War, the prices were increasing but the wages were low. Under these depressing economic conditions of the Second World War the workers in the Simpson group of companies felt the necessity to organize themselves to press for their demands. Moreover, according to one of the publications of the union, early 1940's was period of exploitation of labour by capital. Inhuman treatment was not uncommon (Simpson Union, 1966b : 1).

#### Initial Attempts of Unionization: 1940-44

The beginnings of trade unionism in Simpson group of companies can be traced to Second World War period. The industrialists had made enormous profits during war time, in spite of widening and deepening of the tax structure on the one hand and on the other hand, due to inflation, the cost of living index was rising year by year (Sharma, 1963:105). The first impact of the war on workers and the trade union

movement was the rise in prices and the scarcity of essential commodities. The prices of food grains and other essential goods registered steep rises and many commodities became unavailable in markets. The mercantile community took advantage of the war to indulge in large-scale hoarding and profiteering (Karnik, 1966: 121-22).

Examination of history of trade unionism in Simpson group of companies shows that there were some attempts by workers, political leaders of different parties, to organize the Simpson workers. In 1944, Shri Duraikannu, who was a sympathizer of the Communist party organized the workers and invited Shri S. Krishnamurthy, a politician to lead the union (Simpson Union, 1984b: 1). The union started by Shri Duraikannu and Shri S. Krishnamurthy brought under its head the workers of the Simpson group of companies. The foreign management did not like unionism in their company. The union asked for confirmation of the services of the workers, wage increase, bonus and other facilities. The management considered it was a threat to the smooth running of the company. The foreign Managing Director sought help from Shri Anantharamakrishnan who was a share holder, to deal with Indian workers and their union.

Shri Anantharamakrishnan studied the situation at the local level and the national level. The union was controlled by communists. Which the management did not like. Skillfully, Shri Anantharamakrishnan utilized the existing political



situation to break the union. He approached Shri K. Gurumurthy clerk in the Simpson plant, and asked him to start a rival union in the company. With the help of the management he organized the staff members of the company during 1944.

One day during 1947, a General Body meeting of the workers' union, started by Shri Duraikannu, was held in Napiar Park in Madras. According to our respondents at that time the park was not electrified. The meeting was conducted with the help of petromax lights in the night. It was said that Shri K. Gurumurthy, the leader of staff union intruded in the meeting with the help of some anti-social hooligans and disturbed the peaceful proceedings of the meeting. They put off the light and created chaos. Shri Duraikannu was arrested by the police on some fabricated charge. According to a pamphlet (G.S's Election Pamphlet, 1980: 1) with the help of the management Shri K. Gurumurthy harassed Shri Duraikannu and he could not withstand the pressure brought about by Shri K. Gurumurthy in collaboration with the management.

After the incident in 1947, Shri Gurumurthy began to control both workers and staff unions. Shri Gurumurthy was a sympathiser of Congress party. The attempts to form a union by the Communists in Simpson group failed because of the growing anti-Communist feeling in the wake of World War II, due to the changes in the stand of the Indian Communists on

India's participation in the war. After the Second World War, the Congress socialist leaders developed a sharp anti-Communist and anti-Soviet line of propaganda and consequently clashed with the Indian Communists (Revri, 1972: 277-78). The nation-wide anti-Communist feelings partly generated by Indian National Congress party affected plant level unions. In the Simpson group the union led by the Communists become unpopular because of the growing anti-Communist feelings in the society and the sustained attempts by the management to undermine it at the plant level. The Indian national Congress party's mass appeal as front line organization fighting for independence, enabled Congress leaders and Congress sympathizers to organize workers more successfully. In the Simpson group the union started by the staff member became popular against the backdrop of the popularity of the Congress in the country and the managements patronage of the organization. Shri Gurumurthy who organized the staff initially became president of the union in 1944 and merged the workers union in 1947.

Simpson group of companies has a single union. Union membership is drawn from both workers and the staff. The union is headed by the president and two secretaries representing workers and staff. The Simpson union has 9000 members drawn from workers and staff. The union is not formally affiliated to any central trade union organizations.

It maintains fraternity ties with International Metal Workers Federation, situated in Geneva. The Philosophy behind having one union for both workers and staff is to promote solidarity of employees in the Simpson group which finds expression in the following motto of the union: "Unity of Pen and Spanner".

After the merger of both workers union and staff union in 1947, he soon realized that it was difficult for him to carry out his day-to-day duty as a union leader and as an employee. So, he felt it was necessary to take the help of an outsider to lead the union. He invited Shri R. Venkataraman, a Congress leader, to become the president of the union and he himself became Vice-President. The outside leader continued as the president from 1948 to 1958 till he became a Minister in the Congress ministry in Madras State (Simpson Union, 1966b : 1). Shri K. Gurumurthy assumed the presidentship after Shri R. Venkataraman joined the ministry. The study reveals the penetration of political parties into trade union in the Simpson group of companies right at the time of inception of the union.

As mentioned earlier, under the impact of the Second World War profits of the industrialists increased and the conditions of the working class deteriorated all over the country - Simpson group of companies were no exception. Although Shri K. Gurumurthy organized the union with the

management's blessings, under the pressure of the workers whose conditions were deteriorating he could not but press for the demands of the workers. When the union attempted to press for the demands of the workers, the infant union of the Simpson group had to face endless troubles due to the antagonistic attitude of the management which wanted to curb unionism. When the union demanded better working and living conditions the management came down with a heavy hand to break the union. The office-bearers of the unions were victimized. There was considerable agitation and the union president was even assaulted at the orders of the management which resulted in his losing total vision in one of his eyes. After the War the situation deteriorated and there were strikes and lock-outs in the early 1950s. There was considerable unrest for about 10 years (1944-55) in the entire Simpson group of companies. The management openly declared that they were bent upon crushing the unions. (Simpson Union, 1966b: 3).

In 1953 the government passed legislation prohibiting automobile assembly by foreign companies in India. According to the Association of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (1982: 205) in India the effective date of establishment of manufacturing of automobile components can be put down as 1953. This marks the beginning of automobile manufacturing in India. Simpson group of companies also began to manufacture

automobile components soon after the legislation came into effect.

Change in the status of the company from assembling to manufacturing of automobile components brought change in the organization of the company. Workers demanded confirmation, wage increase, bonus and other welfare measures. Due to this the union-management relations became strained. In 1954, during the Deepavali festival the union asked for 6 months bonus for the workers. The management agreed to give bonus for 3 months only to workers in the parent Simpson plant. The management argued that it was not in a position to pay bonus to the workers of other units of the company. Due to this bonus issue the workers went on strike. As an interim measure the union asked for advance because the festival was nearing and the union also demanded that this advance should be deducted from the bonus amount and not from workers' salary. The management agreed to give the advance on one condition that the advance would be deducted in instalments from November salary. As a measure to weaken the union's stand the management encouraged a section of workers to receive the advance. This led to a conflict among the workers in which Shri Gopalkrishnan a worker from Berkly Assembly, was stabbed on 10.11.1954 (Peerikai, 1954). The management accused that the union was responsible for this incident. Further, it suspended Shri K. Gurusurthy,

Vice president of the union, Srinivasan, Balasubramanian, J. Krishnaswamy, K. Seethapathi, C. Challasamy and N. Ramanathan from 11.11.1954.

### Give-and-Take Policy between Union and Management: 1955-67

The turning point came over dramatically in the early part of 1955. The bonus strike continued and the workers of the Simpson group of companies demanded the settlement of bonus issue and reinstatement of suspended workers. The agitation became so intense that the Government had to intervene in the matter. Shri T.T. Krishnamachari, the then Minister for industries and commerce in the Government of India, called for a meeting of the management of the company and the union in the presence of Ministers of the Madras Government. In 1955 a settlement was brought about between the management and workers by the intervention of the state. The settlement brought about by the leaders of Congress party in their capacity as Ministers made the management realize the importance of cooperating with the ruling party in management's own interests and agreed to accept the settlement and recognized the union, which implicitly had Congress backing. This ushered in an era of give-and-take policy between union leadership and management. Later it developed into an alliance between the union leadership and the management. The trade union

leadership gained access to the management which was not possible earlier. The patronage of the ruling party and the management's willingness to accommodate Congress-backed union, made the labour union president, a powerful and an unquestioned leader.

In spite of close association with Congress party the president maintained that the union was independent and was not affiliated to the labour wing of Congress party. However, we find in one of the issues of the official magazine of the union, Sanganatham that the union was affiliated to Congress labour wing (Simpson Union, 1966a: 19).

Till 1967, the Congress party was in power in Madras State. As we have explained earlier, the then president Shri Gurumurthy was close to the ruling party, i.e., Congress party, especially to the Minister for industries in Madras State who was none other than the president of the union of Simpson group companies during 1948-58. Naturally the Minister had sympathy towards Simpson workers and their union. The then union president exploited the fact that he had the backing of the Congress party and also the fact that the management could not afford to antagonize the ruling party, to perpetuate himself in the union. He built up a following for himself among the workers by:

- (a) favouring some workers;
- (b) appointing his nominees to various positions in the union; and
- (c) eliminating



opposition from rank and file with the help of management.

Trade Union Leadership's Direct Participation in Political Arena and Emergence of Factions in the Union: 1967-71

As mentioned before, the leadership maintained that the union was not affiliated to any party. However, it was under the influence of the Congress party. The extent of influence of the Congress party over the union leadership became clear in 1967. Political events that took place outside industrial arena deeply affected the union in Simpson group of companies and transformed the character and direction of the trade union. In 1967 the nation went to polls to elect a new Parliament. In Tamil Nadu elections for state legislature were also held simultaneously.

The year 1967, marked a historic turn in the political life of Tamil Nadu. The DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) party established by the late Shri C.N. Annadurai emerged on the political scene. The DMK party challenged the Congress party as an alternative party articulating the political, economic and regional-cultural aspirations of the people of Tamil Nadu. The DMK party had its origins in the DK (Dravida Kazhagam) movement led by Sri E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker. The DK movement was a mass movement which had a following in lower castes and depressed classes of Tamil Nadu. The DMK inherited its philosophy and ideology from the DK movement. The late Shri C.N. Annadurai, emerged

as the leader of the DMK party. He made a strong impact on the political scene and he became the most respected charismatic leader among the masses. The industrial working class was also influenced by the DMK party and its leader. A substantial number of Simpson workers admired DMK party and its charismatic leader. The DMK party contested the elections in 1967. The Congress party realized the challenge and wanted to clip the wings of the DMK. It could only be done by defeating the DMK at the hustings. The most important objective of the Congress party was to defeat the DMK party and its leader. The DMK leader who had mass support could only be defeated by a person who had influence on the working class population. The Congress party found the match in the president of the union of the Simpson group. The Congress leadership, persuaded by the then AICC president Shri Kamaraj, invited the president of the union to contest the general elections as a Congress nominee against Shri C.N. Annadurai. The union president agreed to the proposal and entered the poll fray and contested against Shri C.N. Annadurai. In a desperate bid to defeat the opponent, the union president mobilized union members to work for him in electioneering. The management of Simpson group also supported the union president in the elections. The management allowed 5,000 workers to carry out the electioneering work for the union president for about 15 days

(Ganapathy Lingam, nd: 1). This indicates a strong coalition between the union president and the management. Under these circumstances, some of the workers who were sympathizers of the DMK party and followers of Shri C.N. Annadurai were also compelled to work for the union president. The workers were faced with the dilemma of having to support their union leader who was contesting elections against their charismatic leader. The union president's election contest reveals the extent of his political connections and the patronage he enjoyed in the ruling party.

In the elections, the union president was defeated by Shri C.N. Annadurai and the DMK party won the elections with a convincing majority and it formed the Government at State level. Shri C.N. Annadurai became the Chief Minister. The union president who was defeated in the general elections, continued to be the president of the union. He developed a distinct hostility towards workers who were DMK sympathizers and he did not lose opportunities to exercise his power to harass them.

The hostile attitude of the union president towards pro-DMK workers made the pro-DMK workers think about their future in the union and in the company. The pro-DMK workers approached Chief Minister Shri C.N. Annadurai and persuaded him that it was desirable to start a union in Simpson group under the leadership of the DMK party. But Shri C.N. Annadurai

refused to support the move. There are two views about why he declined to support the move: (1) In his view the Simpson group staff and employees union was functioning well, and he did not want to interfere in its activities and also he felt that a second union would divide the workers; (2) If the DMK party which was in power, started the DMK labour wing, then unions affiliated to it would expect more from union as well as from the Government. If the government failed to satisfy their demands then the workers might lose faith in the DMK party. It was on these grounds that he did not agree to the idea of extending DMK party's support to form a new union.

In 1968 a dispute over a productivity incentive scheme arose. In one of the departments workers produced more than the targets and they were to get monetary incentive for their productivity. In this regard each worker had to get Rs. 100 as incentive according to rules but they got only Rs. 25. The workers approached the management to find out why they were not paid the full amount. They learned from the management that it was the instruction of the union president that they be paid Rs. 25 each. The affected workers met the union president who informed them that the time had come to punish them. It is believed that in this particular department pro-DMK workers were more in number. The workers protested against the high handed anti-worker

attitude of the union president. In this connection, three workers were suspended by the management on the advice of the union president. Some workers asked the president to explain why three workers were suspended. Again, the next day, three more workers were suspended. All these suspensions were obviously engineered by the union president. So, the workers struck work enmasse on the third day. Since the workers refused to work, the management announced a lock-out. When the workers approached the union president to negotiate with the management to reopen the units the union president informed the workers that he would negotiate with management only if the workers agreed to his proposal. The proposal was that some workers, who in his view were trouble-makers, were to be dismissed. In this process 36 workers were dismissed and the management revoked the lock-out (Ganapathy Lingam, nd : 3).

The dismissed workers approached the Chief Minister, Shri C.N. Annadurai, and requested him to persuade the management to reinstate them. Shri C.N. Annadurai did persuade the management to reinstate the dismissed workers. Soon Shri C.N. Annadurai passed away. The workers were reinstated only after ten months when Shri M.K. Karunanidhi took over as the Chief Minister. The DMK party under Shri Karunanidhi's leadership immediately initiated steps to start a labour wing of the party at the state level. The

workers in the Simpson group who nursed the hope of starting a new union were emboldened by the fact that the DMK party under Shri Karunanidhi's leadership organized labour wing and approached the Chief Minister and persuaded him that it was desirable to start a new union affiliated to Labour Progressive Federation (LPF), the labour wing of DMK party.

During 1970, there were attempts to start rival unions by other political parties. It was said that the Congress leadership and the leadership of INTUC (affiliated to the Congress party) requested the union president to formally affiliate the Simpson group unions to INTUC. But the union president refused to oblige, not on the ground that it would pave the way for multiple unions but on the ground that if his union got affiliated to INTUC he would have to follow INTUC - sponsored leadership in decision-making. His decision not to get the union affiliated to INTUC was based on the consideration that he would lose power and importance. Then INTUC leaders initiated a move to start a new union among Simpson workers. They succeeded in establishing INTUC - sponsored union only in 'Adison Paints', one of the units of Simpson group of companies (Simpson Union, 1971: 3).

#### The LPF Union in Simpson Group of Industries

We have seen already that the union leadership started victimizing the pro-DMK workers. To stop victimization the

Pro-DMK workers started mobilizing support from workers to oppose the union president. In early 1970, the LPF was organized, and a politician-cum-professional union leader from Coimbatore became president of the LPF in Simpson units. But the LPF was not given recognition by the management. It continued to recognize the existing union headed by Shri Gurumurthy.

In course of time the dispute of bonus for the year 1970 arose in Simpson group of companies. While the union headed by Shri K. Gurumurthy demanded a bonus payment of Rs. 110 lakhs, the management agreed to offer Rs. 77 lakhs towards bonus. When the dispute came up for conciliation, the DMK Chief Minister personally intervened and suggested that the union accept Rs. 50 lakhs as interim bonus and leave the dispute to be settled by him personally in due course. The Chief Minister's offer, although called an interim bonus, was even less than what the management offered on its own. This was not an accident. The Chief Minister's strategy was to isolate the workers' president by aligning with the management. The president of the union had no choice but to decline the offer. While the bulk of the members stood by the president, the small group of DMK- supporters accepted the offer and received the payment (Ramaswamy, 1984: 58).



The union organized a stay-in strike to press its demand, but this was opposed by the DMK- supporters. A clash ensued between loyalists of Shri Gurumurthy and the LPF union members in which a DMK-supporter was stabbed. This incident triggered off a massive retaliation by the DMK-supporters. It is believed that the decision to retaliate was taken by the DMK party bosses in consultation with the Chief Minister. The next few months witnessed unprecedented violence against Shri Gurumurthy's supporters. It seems the police turned a blind eye to the arson, loot and organized violence apparently under instructions from the Chief Minister. Scores of cases of brutal assault resulting in serious injury were not pursued by the police even though the assailants were identified by the victims. On the contrary, in some cases, hospitalized victims were arrested and remanded by the police (Ramaswamy, 1984: 58-59).

As a final effort, the pro-DMK workers undertook a signature campaign against the union president and asked him to step down. They gheraoed the president at his office. Unable to face the combined onslaught of the state machinery, and the DMK party workers from both inside the company and outside, the president resigned from the union office. Along with the resignation from the union office he also resigned from the factory job. This brought to an end a period of trade unionism which was dominated by an individual leader

who ignored the norms of democracy and made the union oligarchic. However, unionism in the next phase, was in no way more democratic.

Capture of Simpson Union by the Ruling Party's Labour Wing (LPF) : 1971-72

As we have mentioned earlier, Shri Gurumurthy was forced to resign and leave the labour scene. Then the Chief Minister Shri Karunanidhi called a public meeting which was attended by Simpson workers, representatives of management and the general public at Kannappa Thidal (Kannapappa Stadium) in Madras on 8.5.1971. In the course of his address the Chief Minister announced that the Simpson group of companies would have one union and proclaimed that Shri Kattur Gopal, a politician-cum-professional trade union leader who was the president of LPF union in Simpson group of companies would take-over as the president of the union. This satisfied the LPF activists and they merged the LPF union with the Simpson unions. Further, according to workers in our study, a DMK activist who was supposed to have taken the lead in assault and arson was nominated as Vice-president. The management accorded recognition to the new leadership.

After formal recognition was given by the management to the new DMK-sponsored union and its office bearers the union signed an agreement regarding wage and the pending

bonus issue with the management on 23.8.1971 (Simpson Union, 1971: 3). However, a section of the Simpson workers did not like the way the new president was foisted upon them. Moreover, the agreement, which was signed by the new president of the union, Shri Kattur Gopal, was viewed by the workers as anti-worker agreement. They felt the agreement went against their interests.

Some of the provisions of the agreement caused dissatisfaction among the workers. Mainly two issues caused great concern to workers. One, the new union withdrew a case against the management in connection with the 1968 strike which was pending in the Labour Court; two, the union agreed for single pay for mandays lost during 1968 strike to be compensated by the workers in near future. The second issue needs clarification. According to an earlier arrangement, the workers worked five days a week, Monday through Friday, and Saturday and Sunday were holidays. If they worked on Saturdays, it was considered as overtime. They were paid double wages for over time work. But according to the agreement, to compensate the work of 24 days lost during the 1968 strike they had to work on Saturdays but without overtime wages. Majority of the workers considered that it was just against the welfare of the workers.

The majority of the workers felt that the ruling party-sponsored union no longer represented their aspirations.

The workers of Simpson group of Companies approached the leading political leaders like Shri Kamaraj for advice. Shri Kamaraj reviewed the situation and felt that the problems of the workers of the Simpson group of companies would have to be examined by involving political parties and other central trade union organizations. He suggested that a committee, with members drawn from various political parties such as Syndicate Congress, Swatantra party and trade unions such as AITUC, CITU, INTUC and HMS should be formed. A six-men committee was formed with members drawn from the above parties and trade unions. The committee's task was to suggest ways to restore normalcy. The committee suggested that holding elections democratically would solve many problems. While the six-men committee was deliberating on steps to resolve the problems the ruling party-sponsored union was keen on the provisions of the agreement being implemented. Majority of the workers refused to work on holidays to compensate mandays lost. The union leadership realized that if the union was not in a position to make workers accept the provisions of the agreement, it would mean that the union did not enjoy popularity among the majority of the members. It was a threat to the survival of the union. So, the leadership and some DMK activists insisted that the members of the union would have to accept provisions of the agreement. This resulted in a series of violent clashes

between the union loyalists who were also DMK-supporters and workers who opposed the agreement. On 30.10.1971 in some areas of Madras city, a violent clash broke out between supporters of the union and opponents, in which Shri Harimohan, a worker from Bimetal Bearings, one of the units of the Simpson group of companies and Shri Kulothungan were attacked by non-DMK workers (Simpson Union, 1971: 15). The DMK- supporters resorted to terrorizing the workers who supported the six-member committee.

In 1972, the six-member committee of prominent leaders worked out certain strategies to restore normalcy and met the Chief Minister to finalize the proposals. But upon the heels of this settlement came a violent assault on non-DMK activists who were liasing with this committee. Angered by the continuing violence, almost the entire work force went on a stay-in-strike demanding the resignation of the new president (Ramaswamy, 1984: 60). The ruling party seeing the tidal wave of the workmen had to allow the union election to be held. Election for the union in the Simpson group of companies was held in April 1972, under the direct supervision of the labour department of the Government. In the election Shri Kuchelar and his team got elected with thumping majority. This was the first election democratically held by secret ballot since the inception of the union. Shri Kuchelar was involved in the six-men committee. He is a

professional trade union leader who was once a member of the Communist party. But had left the Communist party and had started operating as an independent leader. This study shows that in the context of complex inter-relations between trade unions and political parties industrial method alone is ineffective. In this case we have seen that political parties joined together and operated as a pressure group in support of the non-DMK workers against the ruling party-sponsored union on the one hand and the management on the other.

#### Change of Union Leadership and Violence in 1972

In the union election which was held in 1972, Shri Kuchelar's team won with a majority. Shri Kuchelar and his team seized 121 positions of group leaders out of 125. The elected team assumed the responsibilities of the union affairs. The pro-DMK workers and their ruling party-sponsored union leaders could not accept the result of the election, and disturbed the peaceful working atmosphere of the company. According to one of the respondents, it looked like a 'civil war'. The democratically held union election also could not solve the intra-union conflict which was interwoven with politics. Pro-DMK workers engaged themselves in disturbing the peaceful working atmosphere, essentially with the help of the ruling party.

Then came another mile stone in the history of the trade union movement in Simpson group of companies. On June 15th 1972,

a pro-DMK worker Shri Balaraman who was an employee of Simpson plant No. 3 distributed copies of a pamphlet among the workers, which was written against Shri Kuchelar's leadership. The supporters of the then union president asked the pro-DMK worker not to distribute the pamphlets among the workers. The supporters of the president explained to him that the new president had assumed union responsibilities recently and one should wait to see how he would perform before criticizing him. The pro-DMK worker did not listen to them, but continued to distribute the pamphlet. His activities angered the president's supporters and he was forced to stand on an empty drum as a punishment. At that time Shri Prathap Chandran a worker who was the vice-president of the union (during 1971-72) under Shri Kattur Gopal, also came to the spot. It is believed that Shri Prathap Chandran was the main architect of violent clashes that began in 1967.

It was said that the non-DMK workers experienced difficulties and problems every day in the factory and sought to find a solution. So, the non-DMK workers thought, if they could teach Shri Prathap Chandran, the alleged main architect of the troubles, a lesson then every thing would become normal soon. While Shri Prathap Chandran made enquiries with the workers, regarding the persons responsible for the drum-incident, the non-DMK workers got angry and a spontaneous violence brokeout. The workers closed all the



exits and started assaulting Shri Prathap Chandran. There was no way to escape from the angry mob. The mob assaulted him to death. This news spread like wild fire. In a short time the estate became a battlefield. The police and fire service personnel together tried to restore normalcy, but the angry mob did not allow them to do their service. On the same day i.e., 15.6.72 in the evening Shri Kannan Iyengar, a worker from the Simpson group came out of the estate and was assaulted by the angry mob and he was beaten to death. When Shri Prathap Chandran, a rank and file leader of pro-DMK workers was killed, his supporters took revenge by killing Shri Kannan Iyengar, a supporter of Shri Kuchelar. This led to closure of the Simpson group of companies in Madras. The leading figures fled from Madras and went to their home towns or some other hide outs.

A few days later the DMK men raided the office of a daily news paper and three weeklies, in the heart of the city, for being critical about their party and engaged in violence and arson. Several houses of non-DMK men were set on fire and an attempt was made to assault the president of the union. The next day DMK men taking part in the funeral procession of the former vice-president indulged in arson and violence all along the route. During the entire course of these events the police stood by and watched. The studied inaction of the police was castigated by the Sarkaria

Commission as a disgraceful abdication of responsibility'. The DMK men then hatched a plot to assassinate the president. In the assault, however, they only managed to murder his assistant. In his dying declaration the victim named his assailants (Ramaswamy, 1984: 61).

In connection with 15.6.72 incidents the management dismissed 400 workers from all the units in Madras and filed a case against them. However, the state government viewed the dismissal as a grave threat to law and order and also to political stability. The ruling party felt that the dismissal would further aggravate the situation and hence insisted that the management should take all the 400 workers back into service. Since the chief Minister intervened in the matter the management agreed to reinstate them and paid their wages for the period of dismissal. An intensive intra-union conflict that began in 1967 came to an end in 1972 with in the loss of 3 lives. With the leaders fleeing the scene, the use of police force and the intervention by the state pacified the workers and the situation became normal in 1972. Then the management resolved to find a relatively permanent solution to the problem of factional conflicts in the union. The management decided to shift the following units from Madras. They were: (a) India Pistons - Repco Ltd., to Kakkalur; (b) L.M. Van Moppes Diamond Tools India Ltd. to Coonur; and (c) Bimetal Bearings Ltd. to Coimbatore

(Simpson Union, 1983: 6).

Relocation of Bimetal Bearings in Coimbatore:

Bimetal Bearings is a profitable unit. According to the survey of Indian industries (Gopinath Rao, 1984: 181) Bimetal Bearings has the licensed capacity to produce of 13.50 million bearings. In 1972 management of Simpson group of companies decided to shift the Bimetal Bearings Ltd. in which majority of the workers were DMK activists and supporters, to Coimbatore. As a part of the relocation the workers of Bimetal Bearings went to Coimbatore. This removed the hard core DMK activists from Madras.

In 1972 Bimetal Bearings started its production in Coimbatore. The union activities gradually began at Coimbatore after the workers settled down. In a few months' time the factions which were in conflict in Madras came to surface at the Coimbatore plant also. Since Bimetal Bearings was one of the group companies the existing SESU union extended its branch to Coimbatore. With the extension of the existing Simpson group union to Coimbatore, the Bimetal Bearings employees were also covered under it. But the pro-DMK workers were ambitious to establish a union affiliated to DMK labour wing. Hence, factions emerged again in Bimetal Bearing located in Coimbatore.

### Emergence of Bimetal Employees Union in Coimbatore

We have noted earlier that the pro-DMK workers did not like to follow the leadership of Shri Kuchelar, neither did they accept their defeat in 1972 union election. They wanted their feelings be represented by their own leaders. To fulfil this aspiration Shri Govindasamy, a pro-DMK worker from Bimetal Bearings started a union- Bimetal Employees Union (BEU) in 1970. In this union mostly pro-DMK workers and those who were dissatisfied with Shri Kuchelar's leadership joined. This union emerged as a rival union to the Simpson group Employees and staff union headed by Shri Kuchelar. It was learned that the move for starting BEU was initiated to extend it at group level, but it could not establish its wing in other units of the Simpson company.

It was said that the representatives of the management of the Simpson companies at Bimetal Bearings, encouraged the pro-DMK activists to form the BEU. The management gave concessions to BEU to establish itself among the workers. The mangement recognized, the BEU and accorded the same status along with the SESU and granted collective bargaining rights to the BEU temporarily. This way the management was able to divide the workers. Whenever the labour dispute arose these two unions could not come to common platform for settling the issues. When the SESU put forth some demands before the management the BEU would refuse to support

the demands and vice versa. The Bimetal Employees union consistently opposed the SESU and it turned out that the BEU ended up supporting the management. Thus the rival unions led to a divided work force.

During 1976, the leaders and members of the BEU realized that: (a) the BEU could not mobilize workers into its fold in other units of Simpson Company other than Bimetal Bearings; (b) the management utilized the rival union situation to exploit workers by supporting one group and opposing other group according to the situation; (c) the BEU was not given permanent collective bargaining rights. The management accorded collective bargaining rights if the stand of the BEU was favourable to the management and collective bargaining rights were denied when the BEU's stand went against the management; (d) the BEU members were not eligible to enjoy any facilities from the SESU. For instance, voting rights, co-operative stores, credit cooperative etc. were denied to the BEU members because the SESU's constitution specifies that these things can be availed only by members of the SESU; (e) being a rival union in only one unit, the BEU could neither oppose management nor oppose the SESU, effectively; and (f) the BEU leaders realized that winding up the BEU and merging with the SESU again would establish a strong faction at the group level. They saw that they would have better and fair chances of capturing the union by

merging with the SESU.

There was a need for a popular leader who could lead the faction at the group level. To oppose a powerful leader like Shri Kuchelar, they needed to have equally powerful and experienced opponent. Thus some Pro-DMK members of the BEU suggested Shri Gurumurthy's name who was driven away by them earlier in 1971. The pro-DMK activists met Shri Gurumurthy and got his assent. In 1976, with the advise of Shri Gurumurthy the BEU was dissolved and all of them joined the SESU. By bringing Shri Gurumurthy into union scene again, the pro-DMK workers felt more confident. Shri Gurumurthy in turn began to consolidate his position in the union and he emerged as an opponent to Shri Kuchelar.

In 1977 union election Shri Kuchelar lost to Shri Gurumurthy (Simpson Union, 1984b:3). But only in Bimetal Bearings, the group leaders from Shri Kuchelar's faction were elected. It was said that the group leaders in Bimetal Bearings did not cooperate with Gurumurthy's faction. Again in 1983 Shri Gurumurthy lost to Shri Kuchelar.

#### 1983 Union Election and Strike

After union election was held in 1983 a conflict broke out in Simpson plant-1 (Madras) between two factions. The management considered it as breaking of discipline by the employees. The management dismissed 12 employees involved

in the intra-union conflict. (Simpson Nalamantram, 1984: 3). Towards the end of 1983 the union decided to go on strike for the following reasons: (a) general demands; (b) confirmation of casual labours; and (c) reinstatement of 12 dismissed workers. On 5.11.1983 the union served the notice of strike to the management indicating that the workmen employed in this company would be going on strike any day on or after 22.11.83. Accordingly, the workers went on strike from 24.11.83 (Simpson and Company, 1984: 3). The strike continued for 90 days. The management played its old game of divide-and-rule policy to break the strike. It threatened the employees by serving them termination order. After 60 days of the strike the opposite faction slowly started withdrawing their support (Simpson Union, 1984: 1). Especially, in Bimetal Bearings the management found a peculiar method to deal with the strikers. The management identified 48 casual labourers and told them that if they join duty they would be confirmed but if they continued with the strike they would be terminated. The casual labourers were in a dilemma. It seems that the rival faction members advised them that the union might not be in a position to get their jobs confirmed due to antagonistic attitude of the management. Hence, when the management offers a chance they should not miss it. On the basis of the rival factions' advice, the 48 casual labourers joined

duty and got themselves confirmed.

It is believed that this incident made the strikers back out slowly. It was said that on the 88th day of the strike all the members belonging to the rival faction (supporters of Sri Gurumurthy) joined duty.

The workers of Simpson group of companies in order to attract the attention of the Government, working class, and the public at large, joined hands with the opposition parties and announced a 'bandh' on 13th Feb., 1984 in Madras city. In order to show sympathy towards the working class the Tamil Nadu Government announced a holiday on that specific day (Makkal Kural, 1984).

The state Government intervened in the prolonged dispute of the Simpson group of companies. On the basis of the advice by the Chief Minister, Shri M.G. Ramachandran an accord was reached whereby the striking workmen called off the strike and reported for duty in a phased manner as per the accord from 22.2.1984 (Simpson and Company, 1984: 3).

The following were the achievements of the 1983-84 strike. They are: (a) all the permanent workmen will be paid 34.5 paise per point over and above 100 points of Madras cost of living Index, (b) all the workmen covered by this settlement will also be paid from 1.12.84, based on the attendance, a sum of Rs. 25 per month as Education Allowance



(c) the company agreed to issue to all eligible permanent workmen terrycotton cloth for two sets of uniforms once in every two years, (d) it was agreed between the parties to constitute a welfare fund for the benefit of the workmen of the company. Effective from 1.12.1984, the management will contribute a sum of Rs. 2.50 per mensem and the workmen will contribute a sum of Rs. 2.50 each per mensem, (e) prices of the food items supplied will be revised as (i) meals 0.60 paise, (ii) tiffin 100 gms. 0.10 paise and (iii) tea 0.10 paise (Simpson and Company, 1984: 4-8).

However, the union failed to get the 12 dismissed workers (due to intra-union rivalry in 1983) reinstated. After the settlement the management claimed that normalcy was restored. However, the management adopted the antagonistic attitude towards the workers and their unions and attempted to bring about division among workers employed in various units. In the official magazine of the union (Simpson Union, 1984 a: 2) it is mentioned that the management adopted a strategy to treat each unit separately for purpose of bargaining with the union. But the union continued to reject the management's policy of plant-level bargaining. The union however, maintained that general demands would have to be dealt at the level of the group as a whole and production, incentive and specific problems would have to be dealt with at plant level.

After the strike in 1984 as well as in 1985 Shri Kuchelar and his faction got elected in the union elections. The factional conflict among groups took an interesting turn. After 1984 election the DMK activists lost their confidence in Shri Gurumurthy. Due to dissatisfaction with Shri K. Gurumurthy the DMK activists started operating independently as a third faction. In the 1985 union election the DMK activists had fielded their own candidates in the union election. It appeared that factionalism was the life-blood of the union democracy. However, the management can utilize the factional conflict among workers to its own advantage. This case study amply demonstrates the tendency on the part of the management to exploit factionalism in a union to its own advantage. In essence the more intense the factional struggles between rival unions, the weaker will be the units among workers. The factional conflict which began in 1967 became intensely political with the emergence of the LFF in 1970. Factional conflict still continues. At present there are three factions: (a) one led by Shri Kuchelar; (b) second led by Shri Gurumurthy; and (c) the third faction consisting of pro-DMK workers who do not have a popular leader as the other two groups. It appears that the pro-DMK workers become more active and more concerned only during the elections and then they become relatively inactive. Earlier in this chapter, we have pointed out that the development of unionism in Simpson group of company was characterised by intense factional conflicts and the

involvement of political parties increased economic and political awareness of the workers and contributed to a higher degree of participation of workers in their union (Masilamani and Haribabu Ejna, 1986: 23).

The case study reveals that trade unions, political parties and state are intricately related. Given the general hostility of management towards unions and the control of the state over economy and industrial relations the economic struggle of working class in ultimate analysis is political. Changes in political and state arenas affect unionism at the level of enterprise also. The nexus between trade unions and political parties which emerged during colonial period has become a necessity both for trade unions and political parties in post-colonial India. Whenever the trade union leadership becomes oligarchic by aligning itself with ruling party and the management the workers find it difficult to discipline the leadership. They seem to follow a different strategy. Instead of disciplining the leadership they change the leadership by aligning themselves with opposition political parties (Masilamani and Haribabu Ejna, 1986: 23).

## II

### History of Unionism in Thomson Radiators

In the foregoing discussion we have seen the dynamics of unionism in single union plant. Right from the

inception of the union, political parties, and their leaders continuously tried to control the union. Further, we have found that the external elements like, political parties, state, and the management influence the internal affairs of the union. We have found in the Simpson group which is a large industrial enterprise the union appears to be strong enough to resist exploitation. This is because of the numerical strength of the union. The large size of the work force influences the dynamics of unionism in several ways. We shall see the union dynamics in the multi-union unit where the workers are divided on the basis of ideological leanings towards various political parties.

Thomson Radiators was started by Shri Naidu, member of the local dominant caste in Coimbatore region in the year 1957. The Thomson group of companies is engaged, in manufacturing automobile components - radiators, coolers and etc. The Thomson and company has 14 units. Most of the units are located within Coimbatore, some of the units are situated in Madras, Faridabad, Jamshedpur, and one is in Malasiya. In contrast to the Simpson group of companies, the unions in Thomson Radiators are not integrated across the units. In each unit unions operate independently. The reason is partly because of the management's strategy to scatter the

units in different parts of the city. This would avoid concentration of work force at the place and weaken their unionism. The management appears to have succeeded in isolating workers in each of the units.

The unit under study, manufactures radiators for heavy vehicles. The plant was started as a small-scale unit and it was located at Gopal park, approximately 6 kms. away from the present location. The unit started with about 10 workers. During the early period, the production process was based on labour intensive technology which depended primarily on manual labour. Labour intensive technology and relatively low level of mechanization placed certain constraints on production and productivity. One of the respondents who has been working in this plant since its inception informed that it was not possible to finish even one radiator per day. After some time the factory reached the stage from purely manual work to the use of simple tools for cutting, bending, processing the raw materials and so on. The capacity of the production also increased slowly.

When the factory was located at Gopal Park, the relations between the employer and employees were informal. Informal relations were possible because of (a) the small size of the unit and (b) direct interaction between the owner and the workers. The employer interacted with workers more frequently at the work place and tended to foster paternalistic relations

with the workers. In an earlier comparative study on human relations in small and big-size industries, the author had found that in the small-size factories the human relations are more informal than in the case of big-size factories. He also found that the employer himself worked with the employees in the small-size industries (Masilamani, 1984). This was true in the case of the Thomson Radiators too. Later on, in this analysis we shall show that as the factory became larger in size and more complex, the informal, relations also had undergone a change.

#### Growth of the Unit and Shop-floor Work Relations

In 1960, the factory was shifted to the present location on Mettupalayam Road in Coimbatore. The production started in the new premises immediately with relatively more advanced technology.

The factory grew from small size industry to medium-size industry. In 1962 the factory employed around 50 workers compared to 10 workers during the initial period. At the new site capital intensive advanced machinery was installed. Fresh hands were recruited. Along with increase in work force and the use of improved technology, volume of production also increased. Respondents pointed out that at present a truck load of radiators were being cleared per day compared to a few radiators in the initial stages.

Most of the old workers who were employed at Gopal Park location, lived near the industrial unit. After the unit was shifted from Gopal Park to Mettupalayam road the workers found it difficult to commute to their place of work which was approximately 6 kms. away from the previous location. According to the respondents, most of the workers did not have any personal means of conveyance, such as bicycles, to commute to the place of work. As a result, they had to spend several hours walking to and fro. Because of this, they could not attend to the domestic problems. The workers said that they wanted to resign from their jobs and seek employment elsewhere. The workers indicated to their employer, the hardships that they were faced with. At that time the employer promised the workers that he would arrange to procure bicycles for them. Months and years passed but the employer did not fulfil the promise. Change of work-site created dissatisfaction among workers who faced problems in commuting. It grew more when they found the employer did not care to arrange for the procurement of bicycles which could have solved their problem.

During early 1960's, the wage was Rs. 1.70 per head per-day and the highest daily wage was Rs. 2.50. Day-by-day the prices went up and the cost of living increased; but the wage remained static. The increasing gap between the static wages and the increasing cost of living made the life

of the workers miserable. Individual workers could not solve their problems in the absence of collective organization.

Further, after introducing the new machinery, employer introduced rationalization schemes which increased the production targets. It meant that the work load per worker also increased. There was no corresponding increase in wages and improvement in the working conditions. The relations gradually started becoming impersonal. For example, when the workers came late by 10 minutes to the shift the management refused to allow them to enter into the factory. Earlier, workers used to leave their work 10 minutes before 8 hours shift was over, to wash themselves. But now the management insisted that they could not leave their positions before completing 8 hours of work to wash themselves. In the Thomson Radiators as mentioned earlier the owner adopted paternalistic relations at the work place when the factory was a small unit. With the increase in size of the work force and increased work load in the new site, the workers began to realize the actual relations between the employee and employer at shop-floor level. They started recognizing the cleavage between the different worlds of workers and that of the management. The relations became more impersonal and the management became more demanding. The workers stated that they could not remain united with the owner.



And although the workers worked to the satisfaction of the management, they did not get the reward promised to them. No one came to know why he did not distribute the rice. But we can say that when the employer realized that the workers were getting restive he pacified them by showing some incentive which he never gave. This arbitrary policy may be characterized as 'Carrot-and-Stick' policy. This increased the resentment among the workers.

In 1962, the workers approached the owner and asked for wage increase. The owner asked all the workers to gather at a central place in the factory premise and said that he would like to address them in connection with their demands. When all the workers gathered at the central place, the owner asked them to form two groups among themselves. He further informed that each worker had a right to join either one of the groups. He designated the groups as group 'A', and 'B'. Workers did not know as to why their employer asked them to form two groups. Without questioning their employer they formed two groups. Some workers were reluctant to join either of the groups. But finally they decided to join one of the groups. At the end of the group formation, the two groups had unequal number of workers. Group 'A' had the majority and the group 'B' had a minority.

Immediately, the employer called the personnel manager and asked him to note down the names of the workers in the

group 'A' and in the group 'B'. Further, he ordered that an increment of Rs. 30 be paid to members of group 'B' and Rs. 10 to the members of group 'A'. The personnel manager noted down the names of the members of the two groups for later disbursement of wage increment. Then the employer asked the members of the two groups to go back to their work. The baffled workers were dumb founded. According to this peculiar wage agreement the workers of group 'B' would get Rs. 30 towards increment for a year and workers of group 'A' would get only Rs. 10 increment for 3 years.

These incidents show that the management did not pay proper attention to the growing grievances of the workers. Instead of solving the labour problem in an objective way the owner was gambling with the workers. This indicates the management's arbitrary policy to deal with the labour problem. These conditions deepened the dissatisfaction among the workers.

#### Union Drive and Organizers' Tactics

The workers' grievances had started growing since 1960. Relatively low wages, no increment, increased work load, strict supervision and arbitrary management decisions and so on made the workers realize the need for unionization

The workers of Thomson Radiators compared their salary with the salary of other factory workers. In other factories

bonus was given to the workers, but the workers of Thomson Radiators were deprived of that. No dress material for their uniforms was given to them, no safety measures were taken in the work place, and whenever possible the management exploited the situation. According to Karsh et al. (1959: 94) the necessary condition for union drive are: a condition of unrest a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction are essential if workers are to be successful in forming a union. These conditions emerged in the Thomson Radiators by end of 1962, because of the deteriorating conditions of the workers as discussed above.

Although the objective conditions for the emergence of workers' union came about the end of 1961, the leadership to shoulder the responsibility of organizing the union did not emerge easily. Some union-conscious workers started educating their fellow workers about the union. As a part of the union drive the union-conscious workers of the factory under study met workers employed in other factories and discussed their problems and possibility of starting a union. The active workers also made it a point to meet as many employees of other factories as possible during their leisure to discuss their issues. The active members gained knowledge about union drive from the experience of other factory workers. They realized that the formation of a union was the only means to solve their pressing problems. Conditions

of workers in the unionized factories were better than those of the workers in the factories where workers were not unionized.

The frontline workers realized the need for outsider's help to form a union in their factory because they themselves could not assume the task. This was because most of the workers were unaware of trade unionism. The management was hostile to trade unions. Workers knew if the management came to know about union drive certainly the management would take severe disciplinary action against the activists. In the Indian context, an effective trade union leader, who can negotiate with the management on an equal footing, cannot perhaps emerge from rank-and-file because an inside leader is more amenable to manipulation by management (Masilamani and Haribabu Ejna, 1986: 24). The workers were aware of the fact that the employer could not do any harm to the outsider as he could to a worker working in the factory. Hence the active workers decided to seek help from the professional union leaders.

The workers of Thomson Radiators analysed union situation in Coimbatore city and found that the unions organized by the communists were more successful in forming strong unions and in protecting the interests of the workers. So the activists sought the advice of the professional unionists belonging to trade unions supported by the communist party.

Meanwhile the employer came to know that the union wave was sweeping among the workers. He decided to curb unionization attempts. He called the workers during the shift time and advised them to start their own independent union without the involvement of the outside political leaders and without any affiliation to central trade unions.

The employer saw that a union affiliated to central organization would be, a threat to his arbitrary labour policies.. The owner realized that union formed by outside leaders would be more powerful and workers will follow the union leadership rather than the employer. As a strategy to curb the unionism in his factory, he decided to start a company-sponsored union. To this effect, one day during 1962 he announced that a union was started in the factory for the workers and he told that all of the workers were members of that union. Some of the respondents who have been working since sixties recalled the events and mentioned that the union which the employer started did not have any name. Further, the employer himself became the leader, secretary, treasurer and everything. No subscription was collected. This attempt of the employer was essentially to prevent the emergence of a workers' union. This kind of management's strategy to curb unionism was found in other studies also (Sheth and Jain, 1968: 289). This was because of his arrogant attitude. He felt he provided food for the

workers and their families and they should obey his commands unquestioningly.

The respondents revealed that the conditions of workers did not improve at all after the employer- initiated union came into existence. The workers' demands were not fulfilled. The workers realized that the union started by the employer was only meant to prevent the workers from forming their own union which obviously would pose problems for the employer.

This the union drive by the activists was stalled for sometime. During 1963, again 10 activists sought the help from the unions led by the communist party leaders at its head office located in a suburb of Coimbatore. The professional union leaders agreed to organize a union in Thomson Radiators and asked the activists not to disclose the formation of union to the other workers until they muster enough support of the majority of the workers in the unit. They had formed the union with a core, membership consisting of the activists and supporters and it was kept secret. The workers had to organize a union secretly because of the hostile attitude of the management towards union.

The question of enrolling the members arose. If the activists had met the workers and had asked them to join the union, probably most of the workers might have refused, saying that the employer did not like the formation of

workers' union and if they did so they would be a target of victimization by the employer. Already they had an experience with the employer as he had started a company union to curb the unionism. At this stage making the union drive known to every one would have been a premature act as the management disliked the unionization of workers. Hence, the activists had to use certain tactics to enroll members to the union.

The activists identified issue of bonus as an important one and used it as a rallying point around which to mobilize workers. Till today during the festival season (October and November) every year the industrial workers in Coimbatore eagerly look forward for decision of Employers' Association and workers' organization on bonus issue. The bonus issue becomes talk of the town around the time of 'Deepavali festival'. During the early 60's workers in other factories received bonus. But employees of Thomson Radiators were denied bonus. The activists identified that this issue was one of the most important means to attract the workers. The activists started approaching the workers secretly to seek their support for demanding the bonus. The workers did not know that the activists were indirectly mobilizing them for organizing into a union. One of the respondents who has been working in this factory for about 24 years and a sympathizer of the communist party reported that one day in the year 1963

as he was returning from a restaurant after taking his dinner around 9.0' clock in the night, about seven of his colleagues stopped him on the way and asked him to sign a paper. The respondent enquired from them the reason for signing the paper. They told him that they were conducting a signature campaign for demanding bonus, revised wage scale, and other facilities. For this purpose they were mustering the support of the workers through a signature campaign. And if he wanted these benefits too he should sign. The respondent was satisfied with the reply and so he signed. For about six months the respondent did not know that he had signed to join the union. This incident shows that wherever direct mobilization of labour is difficult, there the organizers have to use some tactics to mobilize workers' support.

After 6 months, the activists informed the employer regarding the formation of a union and submitted the membership list. The employer was an active sympathizer of the Congress party. He could not accept the emergence of a union in his factory which was affiliated to Communist party. The employer called a meeting of the workers inside the plant and told that he could not tolerate Communist unionism in his factory. He asked the workers whether they wanted to join the union or they would like to be associated with him as before. If they wanted to join the union then



he would not come in their way any more and if they wanted to be associated with him as before then, union should not be there in the factory. All the workers who were in favour of the union shouted that they wanted to be associated with the union. So the employer left the ground and it is said that after that incident he never went inside the plant to see how the workers were doing their work. He died in the year 1973.

These incidents clearly show that the employer who wanted to perpetuate paternalistic relations with workers could not accept unionism in his enterprise. The employer did not come to look into the workers' grievances regarding: (i) wage, (ii) bonus, and (iii) welfare measures. This situation forced the workers to organize themselves into a union. Although the unionization attempts started in 1962, the union came to surface only in 1963.

#### Managements Attempts to Break the Union

After the union was formed the management used several techniques such as transfers, ill-treatment and other forms of harassment to break the union. The management started victimizing the activists. For example, in the case of a worker whom we referred to earlier, was called by the owner and was told that he was a member of the union organized by an outside union. The employer questioned him as to why

he had joined the outside union? The worker said he was not a member of any union. Then the owner showed his signature on the paper which he had signed six months ago. The worker then realized that he had joined the union without knowing. He was enrolled as a member of the union and was not informed about the union formation in order to maintain the secrecy of the union formation. The same afternoon the employer called him again and told him that he was transferred to Madras unit, and he would be dismissed if he failed to attend the duty next day. There was no other alternative for the worker. He left Coimbatore the very same night for Madras. However, the worker continued to be a member of the union and he has been a member for the last 22 years.

As a part of the victimization, the management identified the activists and transferred them to their units located at Madras, Jamshedpur, Faridabad and so on according to their extent of involvement. If a worker was leading the group and highly active in union mobilization then he was transferred to far away place in North India and if he was not very active then he was transferred to Madras. The activists suffered a lot in distant places as they had to leave their families back in their home town. Victimization by management is not a new phenomenon. The capitalists saw harassment as a means of breaking the militant spirit

of the trade unions and turning them into an instrument of class collaboration (Zagladin, et al., 1981: 422).

There in the far away places the union activists were ill-treated. They were not provided housing facilities to stay, when they wanted to visit their families they were not given leave to go. They were given hard work. Even for a small mistake they were served notices for explanation. So, the workers found it hard to continue. Some of the workers who were transferred to north-India and to Madras resigned from their jobs and came back to Coimbatore. It seems that the union was not in a position to help the victimized workers.

#### Emergence of Give-and-Take Policy between the Management and the Union

Shri A. Malai, an activist- worker who was earlier transferred to Jamshedpur, came back to Coimbatore in the year 1965 after two years of service at Jamshedpur. He approached the management of the Thomson Radiators to see if he could be transferred back to Coimbatore. The management agreed to transfer him back to the Coimbatore unit. As he was one of the activists soon the workers at Coimbatore plant realized that he could take active part in the union. They convinced him to assume the leadership and elected him as the president of the union in 1965. The union was

affiliated to the communist central union (AITUC). The workers began to demand better wages, and working conditions through their union. Initially the union was very active and infact secured (a) dress material for uniform (b) bonus (c) increased wages and other benefits. But slowly the union gave up its militant pro-worker postures and gradually became aligned with the management. Although the union was active in the beginning because of the strong involvement of the rank and file. Gradually the union leadership became closer to the management. The union leader Shri A. Malai who joined back in the Coimbatore unit with the help of the management, did not want to displease the management and wanted to be grateful to the management for calling him back to Coimbatore. It seems that there was an implicit understanding between the union leader and the management that the leader would not create any problems for the management in exchange for his transfer back to Coimbatore. This was suggested to the author by some of the workers in the course of the study. Originally the union was affiliated to the AITUC. Later on, due to the split in the Communist party affiliated central trade unions into AITUC and CITU, the union in the Thomson Radiators became affiliated to the CITU in 1970.

Emergence of Labour Progressive Federation (LPF-DMK)  
in Thomson Radiators

The LPF union which was affiliated to the DMK party emerged in 1969 in this unit. There are two views prevalent about the reasons for the emergence of the LPF in Thomson Radiators.

According to one view, during 1969, some affluent workers of the Thomson factory lended money to fellow workers and charged the workers high interest rates for the credit. This way the rich workers exploited the poor workers. According to the then CITU president Shri A. Malai this was against the ideology of communism. His conscience did not permit workers to exploit fellow workers. Hence he met the owner and informed him of the workers' economic condition and exploitation of poor workers by some rich workers of his own union. The president of the CITU union pleaded with the owner to extend credit to workers to repay their debts, which they owe to the fellow money lending workers. Arrangements were made to deduct these loans from their monthly wages in instalments. According to Shri A. Malai, this was not relished by the rich workers who were involved in money lending business. Since it seriously threatened the interests of the money-lending workers and they developed hostile attitude towards the union leadership. In order to minimize the popularity of the leader and also

to protect their interests they organized their own union. and got it affiliated to the LPF.

According to the other view, which was held by mostly non-CITU union members, after the formation of the union in 1963 the union was active for some time. Then after Shri A. Malai took charge of the union in 1965 gradually it became inactive and started ignoring the workers' problems. As we have noted earlier, the union adopted a give-and-take policy which pushed the leadership closer to the management. This in turn led to a certain kind of apathy among the rank and file.

This dissatisfaction with the existing union paved the way for the emergence of another union. As mentioned in the earlier section of this chapter, during 1969, in Tamil Nadu the Dravida Munnarta Kazhagam started its labour wing and began to organize industrial labour under the banner of the Labour Progressive Federation. The workers who were dissatisfied with Shri A. Malai's leadership decided to organize themselves into a new union. The LPF's attempts in organizing the workers at state level affected the plant under study also. However it appears from the examination of the history of unionism in Thomson industry both the developments mentioned above contributed to the emergence of the LPF in the unit.

Change of Political climate at National level and Emergence of INTUC in Thomson Radiators

The CITU and the LPF were the two unions in the Thomson Radiators till National Emergency was declared in 1975 in India. President's rule was imposed in all the states. Severe action was taken on the activities described by the Congress- I Government as anti-social. Private money lending was considered as one of the illegal activities because of high interest and improper way of running the business. We have noted earlier, that the prominent persons in the LPF union were involved in lending money to their fellow workers at very high rate of interest.

After the declaration of Emergency in India, the DMK government which was in power during that period in Tamil Nadu was dissolved by the central government and President's rule was imposed. During the emergency period, in Tamil Nadu, the DMK party men were harassed. The active party leaders and union leaders owing allegiance to DMK party were arrested under the MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) and were put behind the bars.

To escape from the police harassment and possible arrests which the Government resorted to, against money lending and other activities described by Congress-I government as anti-social activities, the DMK affiliated LPF in the unit felt that if they could change their allegiance

from LPF (DMK) to INTUC (Congress-I) they would be free from all the troubles.

The current president of the AITUC (which emerged in 1979) of the Thomson Radiators was the member of the LPF union before National emergency was proclaimed. He told the author the following:

The whole union named itself as INTUC union for the personal benefit of the LPF union leaders and some other members. Further, some of the CITU members who feared that the Government would take some action against them also joined the INTUC union.

The INTUC union came into existence in 1976 right after the announcement of National Emergency in India to preempt harassment. Selfish motivated union leaders have proclaimed the allegiance to the INTUC for their personal gains. The INTUC was started not because of the 'felt need' of the workers but in order to protect the vested interests of some workers and leaders.

#### Emergence of the AITUC in 1979 in the Unit

After the emergency was revoked in 1977, the activists, the affluent workers who were lending money felt relieved. The CITU union under the leadership of Mr. A. Mali continued to be pro-management and the INTUC continued to be dominated by workers who had vested interests. In 1979, a worker who was a money lender and was also a leader of the INTUC



wanted to start his own factory. He knew that if he resigned from the factory then the INTUC union would become weak and the CITU would take advantage of this situation. The INTUC leader (earlier who was leader of LPF) nursed a permanent grudge against the CITU because it had exposed his activities in 1969. To avert the dominance of the CITU, the INTUC union leader suggested to start a new union which would care for the workers' interests. By attracting the majority of the workers towards the new union the power of the CITU union would be neutralized.

The leader of the INTUC union in the unit called the GBM of his union and informed about his decision to resign from the factory job. He also mentioned his decision to dissolve the INTUC union and asked the workers to form a new union. During the GBM the DMK activists suggested that because the INTUC union emerged from the LPF union, the new union should be renamed as LPF. But others who were non-DMK sympathizers objected that the LPF during its existence between 1969- 1976 did not gain popularity among the workers because of corrupt practices of the DMK party at the state level which were revealed by the Sarkaria commission.\* Further, some workers mentioned, that the DMK

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\* Sarkaria Commission was set up by the union government to inquire into certain charges against the DMK ministry in Tamil Nadu headed by Shri Karunanidhi.

party had developed a anti-Malayalee sentiment around early 1970's which was felt by Malayalee population from Kerala in Madras as well as in Coimbatore. Obviously the Malayalee workers did not like to support the union associated with the DMK party. Due to the above reasons the non-DMK workers as well as workers from Kerala employed in the Thomson Radiators refused to join the LPF union if it was revived again. Because of disagreement among the workers, the chances for the revival of the LPF were not bright. So the workers, non-DMK members felt that the LPF would not be able to neutralize the power of the CITU union.

We have seen that this move to start a new union was basically to oppose the CITU union effectively. In order to start a new strong union they had to attract workers from various castes, religious, linguistic and political groups. However in the GBM they decided to start a new union and to affiliate it to the AITUC. The decision was endorsed by the majority of the members in the GBM. The AITUC union was born in 1979 with workers who wanted to revive the LPF, workers from the INTUC union and some workers from the CITU union becoming members of the new union affiliated to the AITUC.

This shows the extent of inter-union rivalry. The leader who wanted to resign from the factory feared that his resignation would lead to the situation where the CITU

union's hands would become strong and the INTUC union would become weak. The leader could not extricate himself from his involvement in the inter-union rivalries even after his resignation.

The president of the CITU union informed the author, during the course of an interview that the AITUC union did not have any constructive programme. According to the leader, the main aim of the AITUC union was to oppose the CITU union. However it was found that the AITUC did in fact took up some of the workers' grievances and solved them. After the emergence of AITUC it demanded for a settlement which covered wages, confirmation, work norms and welfare facilities for a period of 3 years. With the AITUC's active involvement for the first time, an agreement was signed by unions and management in 1980. It came to be called among the Thomson workers as the 'first settlement'.

According to the provisions of the agreement, increased wages, increased bonus, fixed norms for confirmation of workers etc. were implemented. These demands were met by the management on the condition that the management would change the work norms. As a part of the agreement, the management increased the work load of the individual workers. The members of the AITUC were satisfied with the bargain and the union affiliated to the AITUC became popular. As a result some members of CITU changed their loyalties from CITU

to AITUC.

During the course of time a sensitive incident occurred which left its mark on the history of unionism of Thomson Radiators. The management has been supplying milk to the workers in the factory twice a day at subsidized rates for a long time. To start with, the workers were supplied milk with refined sugar. During early 1980's suddenly without informing the workers the management instructed the concerned department to use Khandasari unrefined sugar in the milk instead of refined sugar. The workers did not like Khandasari sugar in their milk and approached the management for an explanation. The management informed them that the price of sugar had gone up and management could not afford to supply refined sugar with milk. The management insisted that refined sugar would be supplied only if the workers increased their contribution.

The workers became unhappy to learn about the decision of the management to switch over to unrefined sugar, a decision which was taken without consulting the workers. The workers felt that was an unfair labour practice. The respondents gave an explanation to the author as to why the management switched over to using unrefined sugar. According to them the employer owned large sugar farms which produced sugar-cane in large quantities. At the same time the market price offered by sugar mills for sugar-cane

was not profitable. In order to minimize loss of sugar-cane produced in the farms the management decided to process it into Khandasari sugar instead of selling sugar-cane to the sugar mills. The management diverted the Khandasari sugar to the workers' subsidized milk scheme. This helped the management in two ways. The management did not have to buy refined sugar from the market and they could find an outlet for marketing the produce of their sugar-cane farms. The buyer was their own factory.

Added to the other issues now sugar-issue became an important and sensitive issue. The workers claimed that it was their right to ask for refined sugar. Especially the pro-DMK workers in the AITUC pressed the leaders to take up this issue. In the 1983 agreement supply of refined sugar was one of the demands by the unions. But the management declined to meet the demand to supply refined sugar.

#### Rebirth of the LPF in 1983 in the Thomson Radiators:

After the 1983 agreement the situation in the AITUC started changing. A section of the workers felt dissatisfied with the settlement. They complained that it was because of the inability of the plant level union leaders and selfish motives of the outside leaders, that 1983 settlement was not successful.

In all this turmoil a leader from the AITUC resigned from the factory. He was an active leader and a source of inspiration and guidance to the union and its members. His resignation created a vacuum which weakened the AITUC union. The AITUC union was forced to seek alternative ways to keep itself alive. In course of time, the union became inactive. A section of the members of the AITUC, especially pro-DMK workers were not satisfied. The sugar-issue remained unsettled and the AITUC did not find any solution in the 1983 agreement. Even after the agreement was over in 1983, pro-DMK workers were pressurising, the AITUC to find solution at the earliest possible. The AITUC became weak because of the absence of: (a) an able leader; (b) lack of interests on the part of the existing plant level leaders; and (c) lack of workers' unity, it could not pursue the labour cause as it did before and the sugar-issue remained unsettled. When the pro-DMK workers saw that the AITUC was not in a position to solve the problems any more, they decided to revive their old LPF union once again. Dissatisfaction with the 1983 agreement, and failure of AITUC led to the re-birth of the LPF in the month of Nov. 1983.

According to the LPF union, out of 320 workers, 120 joined the LPF. The LPF union promised to solve the sugar-issue and take care of other pressing problems which the other two unions i.e., AITUC and CITU unions failed to

fulfil. The LPF is affiliated to District General and Engineering union which is in turn affiliated to the labour wing of the DMK party.

During 1984, around 15 temporary workers were dismissed from their service. They approached the leaders of the CITU and the AITUC unions of the Thomson factory and sought the help of the unions to get themselves reinstated. The unions did not help the dismissed workers. The dismissed workers also approached the LPF and got assurance of being reinstated. In the meanwhile, grievances increased. The sugar-issue had yet to be solved. Hence, the LPF union in consultation with the other two unions, gave strike notice to the management. The two major demands were (a) reinstatement of 15 dismissed workers and (b) supply of refined sugar for milk. They announced that if the management failed to decide by 19.6.84 the workers would go on strike. It was said that the management refused to acknowledge the strike notice. The CITU and the AITUC unions felt that their existence would be threatened if the LPF succeeded in getting the demands fulfilled. Because of this the two other unions withdrew their support from the strike on the day before the strike was to begin, and decided to go for work. But the LPF union was not aware of the sudden change in the decision of the two other unions till the day of the strike.

The CITU union not only refused to cooperate with the LPF but it went to the extent of spreading rumours that if the management conceded the LPF's demands to provide refined sugar, for milk, then the CITU would demand for the supply of Vadai (an eatable) from the management. This incident shows the intensity of inter union rivalry in the Thomson factory. At the last minute AITUC union also withdrew its support on the grounds that the LPF had emerged from the AITUC on the sugar-issue. Hence they decided to see to it that the LPF did not succeed in its agitation. The president of the AITUC of the Thomson factory Shri Appunni told the author that if the workers drank milk without sugar they would not die. Further, he argued that if anyone went to a tea stall for a cup of tea and find that there was less sugar in the tea, he would not go on strike. This is how he rationalized his decision to withdraw his support to the agitation launched by the LPF. He pointed out that the workers should not agitate on the issue and instead they should wait till the management sanctions refined sugar for milk in course of time. This leader did not take into account that the LPF had resorted to strike only after waiting for a reasonably long time. The attitude of the union leaders of the AITUC and CITU clearly brings out their intense rivalry with the LPF. Their goal was to see that the LPF did not gain popularity among the rank and



file. Increasing popularity of the LPF was seen as a threat to their own unions.

During 25 years in the history of the Thomson factory this was the first strike (1984) announced by the union(s). Due to the selfish intentions of the leaders of the CITU and the AITUC leadership of these unions did not come forward for solution. The LPF went on strike for about 15 days. After 10 days of strike the members of the LPF started questioning their leaders about the strength of the union and started backing out. To stop the backsliding of the members the LPF union voluntarily called off the strike and the case was taken up by the Labour Department for inquiry. The outcome of the strike was reinstatement of the 15 dismissed workers. The sugar-issue for milk was not solved.

It was observed by every one including the representatives of the management that had the three unions unitedly given call for strike, the management would have conceded their demand even before the workers struck work. The management fully exploited the union rivalries and remained unperturbed by the strike launched by the LPF union.

Thus the history clearly indicates that the CITU unions policies intended to check the power of the other unions really helped the management and gave the CITU a distinct pro-management leanings. Now when other unions demand

anything from the management the CITU union does not support these demands. Because of these rivalries, the management confidently postpones the implementation of solutions and sometimes ignores the demands of the workers.

#### Emergence of the AIADMK affiliated Union in Thomson Radiators in 1985

In this plant the LPF leading union supported by the majority of the workers at the time of study. In Tamil Nadu the DMK and the AIADMK are the rival regional parties. The ruling AIADMK emerged from the DMK party in 1972. Then onwards each party attempted to widen their electoral bases in all sections of the society. The AIADMK led by the charismatic film actor turned politician started making inroads into the strong holds of the DMK party. After the National Emergency in India was revoked in 1977, elections for the state legislature were held in that year. The AIADMK led by Shri M.G. Ramachandran contested elections and captured power in the state legislature. The AIADMK is still in power. The political cleavages outside the industrial arena affected the industrial workers also. As a result factions emerged in Thomson Radiators which proclaimed allegiance to the two regional parties the DMK and the AIADMK.

The pro-AIADMK workers could not accept the fact that their political rival (DMK) were controlling the union in

the factory. To check the power of the DMK affiliated LPF union the pro-AIADMK workers decided to mobilize the AIADMK supporters to form a separate union. The move to organize the AIADMK workers into a separate union became prominent after the 1984 General Election in which the AIADMK won the majority of the seats in the legislature and formed the new government. The electoral victory of the AIADMK induced the AIADMK supporters in the Thomson factory to organize the union in January 1985. The union had only 19 members including the president, secretary and other office bearers. Another fact was that no election was held for office bearers of the union. At the time of the study the new union had yet to get itself registered. The author interviewed the president of the new union formed by the AIADMK supporters in the course of the interview the author asked the president as to what was the rationale behind starting another union when already there were three unions in the factory. The president was of the opinion that the three unions were politically powerless because the parties to which they were affiliated did not have the same political power in the state as the ruling party. He claimed that with the ruling party's help he will be able to solve the labour problems more effectively.

## Conclusion

We have started our discussion with the aim to find out under what circumstances the union emerged in the two industrial units, pattern of union-management relations, pattern of inter-union relations and their implications on members' participation in union activities. We have found from the analysis of the history of unionism in Simpson group of companies, that the economic crisis, created by the Second World War, led to the emergence of union at the group level. The struggle between the union and the management continued from mid 1940's to 1955. After 1955 with the government's intervention in the industrial relations of the Simpson group of companies, the union and the management learned to cooperate with each other. Hence, the period of give-and-take policy emerged in 1955 and continued upto 1971. During this long period, we have found that the union leader became oligarchic. He favoured some workers who supported him and harassed others who confronted him.

Due to the coalition between the union and the management, the workers were not satisfied with the union leader. Due to the absence of the organized faction, the dissatisfied members became apathetic towards the union. The dramatic change started from 1967 with the open political involvement

of the then union president. The members who were not satisfied aligned themselves with the ruling party and drove away the oligarchic leadership in 1971. But the new leadership also was no more democratic than the old leadership for a different reason. Again the workers struggled hard till 1972 to change the undemocratic union leadership. The factional struggle started during 1967 still continues. One cannot say in this kind of intensive factional conflict situation that the members were inactive. Instead they participated actively in the union politics to restore normalcy.

Due to the institutionalized factional conflict, the union became democratic after 1972. With the active participation of the members the democratic union struggled against the management to protect its members. The history of the unionism in the Simpson group of companies characterized by intense factional conflicts, and conflict relations with management increased the economic and political awareness of the workers and contributed to a higher degree of participation of workers in their union.

The history and dynamics of unionism in the Thomson Radiators also reveal that the economic crisis and the management's exploitation led to the emergence of the first union. Due to the antagonistic attitude of the management, the union functioned as secret society for sometime and recruited

members to it. During early 1960's we find that some members were highly active in organizing the other workers in the unit.

After 1965 the union leadership entered into a coalition with the management. This coalition led the members to become apathetic. This dissatisfaction among the workers led to emergence of the LPF in 1969. This new union emerged to articulate the aspirations of the workers because there was no scope for another faction in the existing Communist-affiliated union. The change of political scene at the national level influenced the unionism at the plant also. As a result, the INTUC union emerged in 1976 in this plant. The INTUC union did not attract members and it did not have any programme because its hard core members and leaders had their own vested interests. Their involvement in the union was used as a cover for perpetuating their selfish pursuits.

During 1979 due to some internal change in the union leadership the INTUC union was dissolved and the AITUC union emerged. The AITUC union was active till 1983 but subsequently become inactive. This was because of the resignation of one of the leaders and other internal developments in the union. This created dissatisfaction in one of the groups. The dissatisfied members did not see a promising future in the AITUC union and left it and started the LPF union towards the end of 1983.

The LPF union which emerged to protect the members against the authoritarian management evolved militant strategies to oppose the management. This has resulted in antagonistic relations with the management. The conflicting relations with the management and the democratic practices in the union kept the members highly active in the union affairs. The history of unionism in the Thomson Radiators shows that the LPF union maintained pro-worker profile and the CITU union developed pro-management leanings and the AITUC union was in a dilemma whether to be pro-worker or pro-management union. Either of the choices seems to be a threat to its survival because of the positions of the other two unions.

The history of unionism in these two units shows that the union-management relations at a given point of time are the products of historical antecedents. It also shows that unionism is influenced by the changes in the political arena outside the industrial setting. We have seen that the emergence of a new political party invariably leads to the emergence of a new union at plant level. Union dynamics is also influenced by the management policies on factory level labour situation. Further, the dynamics is affected by the style of leadership of the union and the changing relations between the leadership and the management on the one hand and the changing relationship between the leadership and the workers on the other. Intense inter-union

rivalries invariably push some unions into a coalition with the management. Inter-union rivalries weaken the workers' strength and simultaneously the rivalries place the management in an advantageous position. The rank and file faced with oligarchic tendencies of the leadership does not seem to discipline the leadership. But they change the leadership which in course of time becomes oligarchic or change their loyalties to other unions. The existing union-management relations also influences the pattern of social organization of the particular union which we shall investigate in the next chapter. The constellation of forces, - union-management relations, political events outside the industrial arena, the style of leadership in the union and the pattern of social organization of the union - exercise their influence on workers' participation in their trade unions.



## CHAPTER V

### SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF TRADE UNIONS IN THE TWO INDUSTRIAL UNITS

In the previous chapter we have discussed the origin and development of unionism in the units in our study. Analysis of the union dynamics revealed that the SESU developed as a strong collective bargaining agent and acquired ability to resist the management's unlimited power over the labour. Further, in case of multi-union plant, the CITU, once a militant union, entered into coalition with the management and became moderate; the AITUC union had made promises to its members and gradually lost ground due to reasons we have explained earlier. Since 1983 the AITUC has been in a dilemma whether to be militant pro-worker union or a moderate pro-management union. Finally, by the end of 1983, the LPF union emerged and maintained pro-worker postures and continued to be militant till the end of the field work in 1985.

The history of union dynamics shows that a particular tradition of unionism developed in each of the two units. This tradition influences the social organization of the union. The social organization of the union reflects the relationship between workers and their unions and the functioning of the unions. One of our main objectives here is to find out why some unions elicit greater participation

than other unions do. Emphasis will be laid on the structural elements which govern the membership involvement in union affairs.

The analysis of trade unionism in the previous chapter revealed that a union which evolves a tradition of being a pro-worker union tends to be democratic. Essentially, this is so because it derives its strength from the members. The union cannot evolve into a pro-worker union without its members' active participation in union activities. A democratic union further enhances members' participation in union activities and in turn, the active participation of members sustains the democracy in the union. The union democracy is subject to stress and strain from several sources; (a) the element of leadership in the union: the leader's personality, ego, selfish interests, political motives and leadership coalition with the management. All these may contribute to oligarchic leadership which in turn changes the union into an oligarchy. An oligarchic union affects the participation of the workers and leads to apathy in membership; (b) the management may extend patronage to a particular union and due to this it may violate its democratic practices; and (c) a section of workers which develops vested interests to support a particular union leader. This may ultimately lead to formation of an oligarchic union. It was found from the previous studies

(Ramaswamy, 1977; Mamkoottam, 1982; Murphy, 1981; Masilamani and Haribabu, 1986) that plant level union leaders cannot become oligarchic without the help of the management. The union which is in coalition with the management cannot be militant and democratic. It is well known that the oligarchic leadership does not promote the active participation of members in union activities.

An essential aspect of union democracy is the social structure and organization of the union. Social structure and organization of the union reflects relationship between workers and their unions and the way the union functions. Some of the essential elements in the social structure and organization of the trade unions are: government of the union, union election, communication system; and response of the leadership to members' problems.

#### Government of Union:

Government of union implies the principles which govern the internal structure and functions of a union. The principles empower the leaders and members to control and influence the functioning of the union. Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958: 153) and Cook (1963: 39) define union government as control structure by which leaders and members exercise their power to controlling the union. Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958: 152-53) define control as the capacity to manipulate available means for the satisfaction of needs. It is

therefore basic to the distribution of rewards and punishments within an organization. What a person gets out of an organization depends in part on who controls the available stock of rewards, or, more generally, on who determines the way in which the organization shall operate. Depending on the distribution of controlling power in the union, we may divide unions into three categories: (1) democratic, (2) paternalistic and (3) oligarchic. If the control power in a union is exercised both by leaders and members it is called democratic, if it is exercised by members alone, it is called paternalistic and if the power is controlled by leaders alone, it is labelled oligarchic union.

There are three important elements in the union government: (1) decision-making in: (a) normal situation, and (b) crisis situation; (2) freedom to express members' feeling in the union meetings; and (3) power to elect their own leaders. By making use of these components we can distinguish different types of union government. If a union allows its members to take decision, to discuss issues at meetings and gives them freedom to elect their own leaders or call back the unsatisfactory leaders, then the union is said to be democratic.

#### Decision-making Process in the Unions:

Decision-making is a crucial matter. It may be related to issues such as: (a) day-to-day affairs; (b) meeting

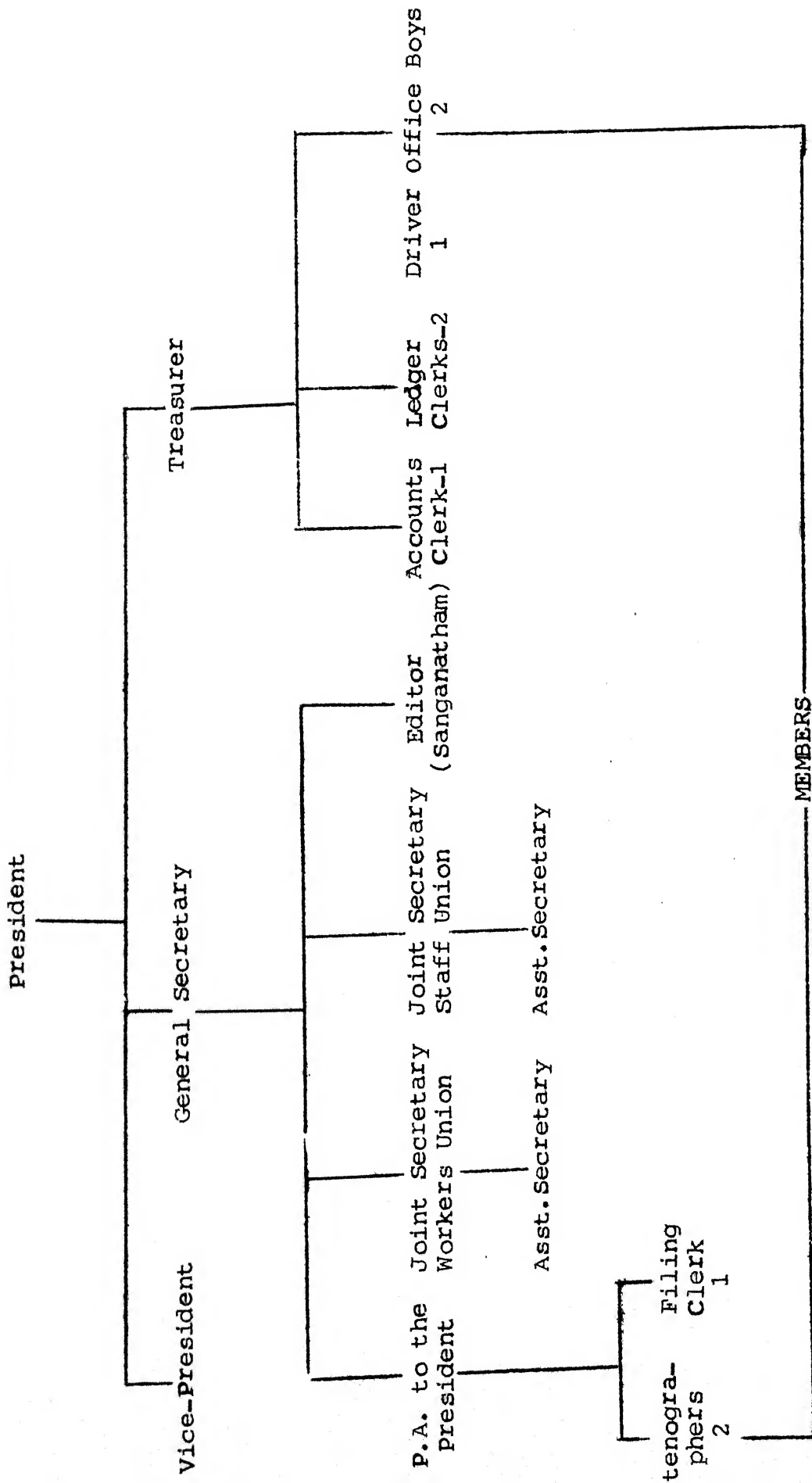
the challenge of new developments; and (c) facing any crisis situation. All the members ultimately share the results of a decision. Coleman (1960: 207) is of the view that democratic decision-making should include not only formal procedures according to the constitution but should also respect the opinion of the majority and avoid any action to obstruct the presentation of opposing views. On the other hand, the bureaucratic union, does not provide meaningful opportunities for members' participation in the formulation, ratification and implementation of the union policy. Having specified the characteristic features of different types of unions, we shall now examine the unions in our study and shall try to find out the extent of democracy in the unions.

#### Decision-making in the SESU Union:

We are familiar with the fact that Simpson group of companies includes 22 units in different cities of India and each unit has a local union which is a branch of the SESU. The unit level unions deal with issues that are specific to the units and general ones that affect the workers in the whole group. Decisions of issues related to these two levels are obviously taken at two levels. Decisions on the specific issues related to the local unit are taken by the branches. However, if the branches cannot resolve the issues, the president of the SESU also would be involved. Taking decisions on issues, such as wages, bonus that affect all

# CHART - 5.1

## ORGANISATION CHART - SESU (SIMPSON GROUP UNIONS)



the workers of Simpson group is taken by the involvement of all the branches of the SESU. Decisions on issues like wages, bonus strike etc. are taken at two stages. First, at plant level each local calls a GBM at their place and the issues are discussed. The resolutions passed by the GBM are then conveyed to the president. If it is an important matter related issues such as strike, the president of the union visits all the units to address the branch level meetings in order to mobilize members' support. The issues are allowed to be discussed and criticisms are received. Because there are factions, it is essential for the president to secure the majority in deciding a certain course of action.

Sometimes, the representatives from 22 locals and the president meet at the head quarters to discuss the opinions of the locals. At this stage the decisions is made on the basis of the opinion of the majority of the representatives. Once the decision is formally made it is taken by the branch leaders back to their locals and it is implemented.

If the issue is related to a local union alone ( for e.g. a dispute between supervisor and workers, quality of production etc.) the group leaders of the particular plant call the GBMS and take a decision. In both these situations the factional groups take part in the meeting and exchange their views to support or to criticize.

Decision-making in the CITU:

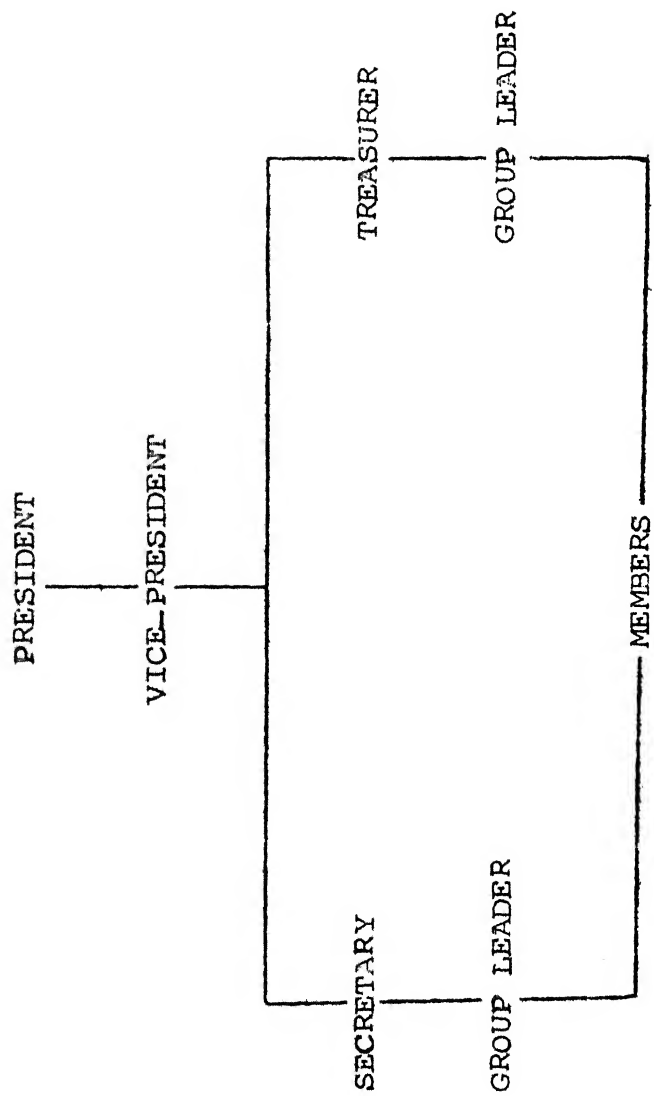
Although the CITU union leadership claims that their union is democratic, their practices prove contrary to their claims. The CITU union leader does not share decision-making power with the members. Power, instead, is controlled by the plant level leader. The leadership does not allow dissent nor does it allow an open discussion of the issues. If any member questions the leader, he simply says, that the member is new to the union and is not experienced enough to participate in the discussion. According to the CITU union president, the members should observe and think over issues in order to acquaint themselves with the nature of the union and the management. According to the members of the CITU union, freedom to comment and to make suggestions etc. are limited.

To substantiate this, we shall report an important incident which would explain the pattern of power sharing between the leader and members in the CITU at Thomson Radiators. During 1984, a strike call was given by the LPF union. We have made reference to this strike in the previous chapter. The LPF union sought cooperation from the CITU and the AITUC, the other two unions in the plant. To take a formal decision on the issue a joint meeting of the LPF, the CITU and the AITUC unions was arranged within the factory premises. The meeting was convened by the LPF union



CHART - 5.2

ORGANISATION CHART - CITU (THOMSON RADIATORS)



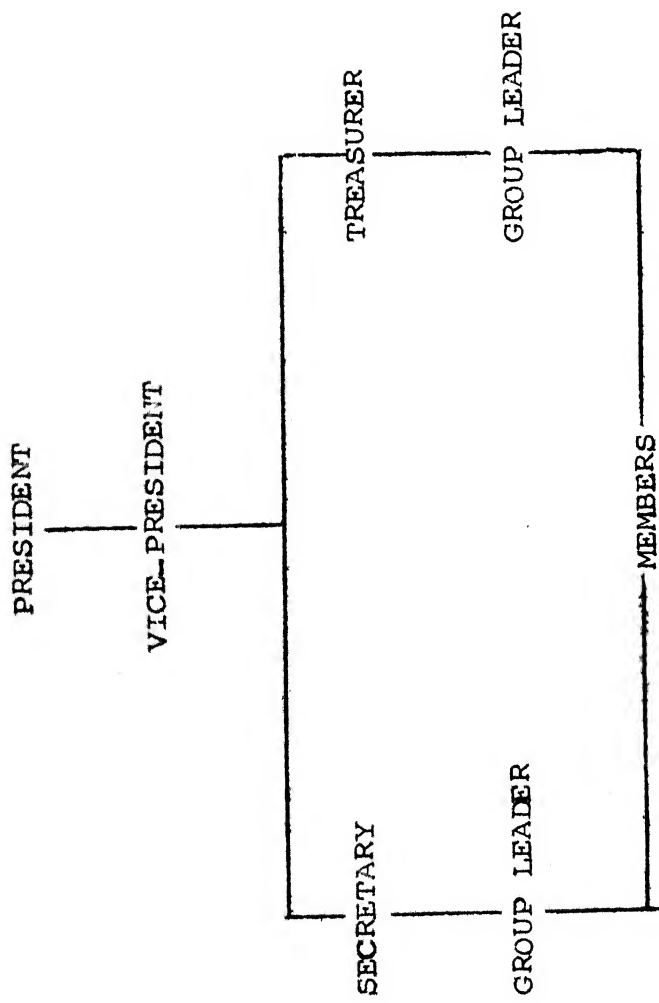
and it was presided over by the CITU union plant president. At the end of the meeting the CITU president announced the inability of his union members to take decision over the issues without consulting the CITU leaders at the head office in Coimbatore. The meeting came to an end without reaching any concrete decision, that is, whether to launch a strike or not.

Again, a few weeks later a joint meeting of the CITU, the AITUC and the LPF unions was called, which was organized by the LPF union. According to the respondents, in the second meeting also the three unions were not able to arrive at a consensus. But all the unions agreed upon one point: that, the union locals should contact their respective head offices and elicit the opinion of the leaders with respect to the proposed strike. It was decided that their opinions would be discussed in another joint meeting a few days later.

In a separate GBM which was convened by the CITU union, the president informed the members of the CITU union that there was no need for a strike. And further, in case the members supported the strikers, and, if some members were victimized, the CITU union would not take any responsibility for protecting the members. According to the respondents, although a majority of the members of the CITU union were in favour of the strike, the president discouraged

CHART - 5.3

ORGANISATION CHART - AITUC (THOMSON RADIATORS)



them and decided unilaterally to withdraw support from the proposed strike. The president did not give the members an opportunity to express their views. This incident reveals that the members have to accept the decision of the leader of the CITU on certain crucial issues. No one can question the undemocratic nature of the CITU leadership. According to the members, the working of the union is largely dependant on the ruling of the president. The members are unable to oppose the leader's action because of fear of harrassment and victimization by the management. This means that in the CITU union, the distribution of power is skewed. The power of decision-making is concentrated in the hands of the leader.

#### Decision-making in the AITUC Union:

The members of this union informed the author that the union allows its members to discuss and take decision on day-to-day affairs, but important decisions are taken by the leader himself. We shall examine the role of the AITUC union in the incident of 1984 strike. The author discussed the role of the AITUC union in the 1984 strike with the president of the AITUC union. The AITUC union president said that he did not want to commit to any decision before a clear picture emerged on the strike issue. During the joint meetings, to which we have referred to earlier, the AITUC union was a silent observer and did not

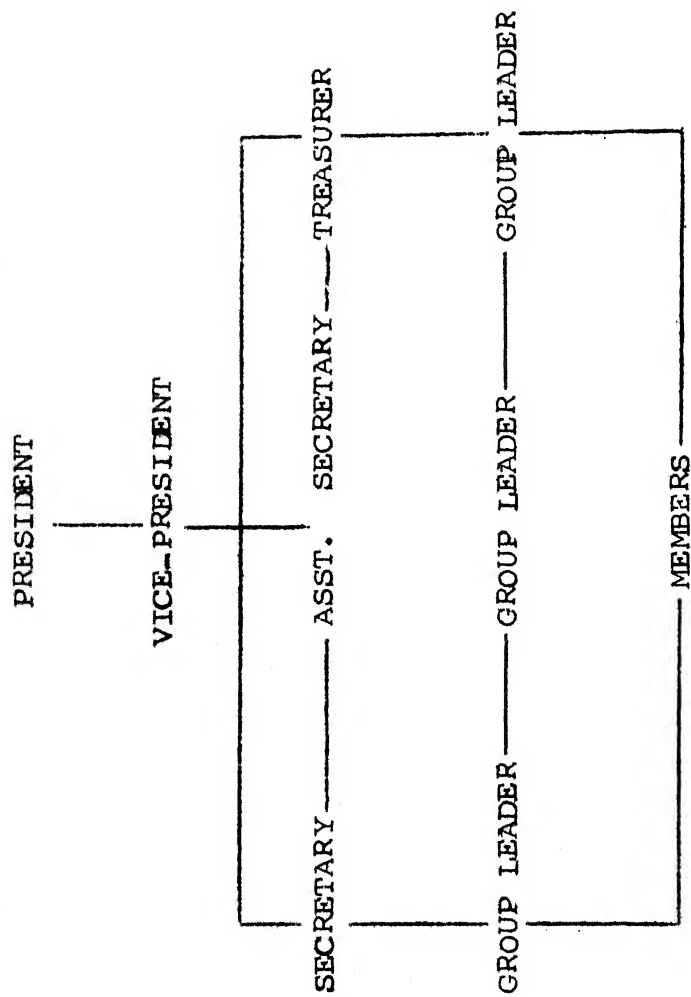
contribute much in the discussions. The president first, wanted the CITU union to take a stand and then to decide the future course of action of the AITUC union. As soon as the president of the AITUC union learned that the CITU union had withdrawn from the strike, in a separate GBM, he made an announcement that he had approached the head office for guidance and the leadership of the head office did not see a need for the strike. Further, he informed them that their brothers (the CITU union members) were not participating in the strike. The members of the AITUC union did not oppose the decision of the leader for fear of reprisals. In view of this situation the president announced the AITUC's withdrawal from the strike. However, majority of the workers felt that there was a need to launch a strike. The author met some workers who deserted the AITUC union because the union did not participate in the strike. In their view the decision to withdraw from the strike was a threat to the working class unity.

#### Decision-making in the LPF Union:

The members of the LPF union told the author that their union is a democratic one. Whether the issue concerns day-to-day affairs or important matters like strike, they have freedom to discuss and choose the course of action. Again, we shall refer to the role of the LPF union in the 1984 strike.

CHART - 5.4

ORGANISATION CHART - LPF (THOMSON RADIATORS)



The idea of strike was first floated by the LPF union. As mentioned earlier, after the joint meetings the LPF union conducted its individual GBMs. In the meeting the plant level president of the LPF union addressed the members of the union and explained the need for a strike. The leader further requested members to present their views on the strike issue. The majority of workers felt that they should go on strike, and another group, a minority said that it would be desirable if they could solve the problems in a peaceful way. In the meeting every one was given an opportunity to express his view, either in support of the strike or against it. Although, opinion was divided on the strike issue, decision was taken in favour of the strike on the basis of the majority opinion.

From this study we have found that, while on the one hand, the leaders of the two unions, CITU and the AITUC, have monopolised the decision-making power exhibiting oligarchic tendencies, on the other hand, in the case of the LPF and the SESU, the leaders shared the decision-making power with rank and file. This indicates that latter two unions are more democratic. The CITU and the AITUC support the view of Stein (1967: 176) who says that decisions are taken by leaders and even the ratification of the decision is a formality in the union meetings.

### Union Elections:

In a democratic union everyone or every faction has an equal opportunity to contest elections, whereas in the oligarchic union some individual or some set of individuals keep contesting the elections. Elections for union office are an important feature of the union government. In the Indian context scholars like Ramaswamy (1977), Mamkootam (1982), show that union election is a mere formality. Especially, Mamkootam in his study (1982: 39) finds that the oligarchic leadership uses unfair practices to win the elections. We shall see the election process in different unions under study to ascertain the extent of democracy in the unions.

### Union Election in the SESU Union:

From the dynamics of unionism of the SESU we have found that after 1972, union election was formalized. The union election is held every year. The members of the SESU, who pay the annual subscription regularly without any dues, are eligible for voting. The members with voting rights can elect their group leaders, executives and the president directly through secret ballot method.

For the post of a group leader at plant level only those working in the particular plant are eligible for contesting. The post of the president of the SESU is open



to all including outside leaders who are interested. The interested persons should be proposed and seconded by the members of the SESU. The tenure of the office is only for a year.

From the analysis of the union dynamics it is found that due to the factional conflict, the election becomes an important affair and members of the factions participate in it actively with an intention of electing their own faction member to various offices. The election of the SESU supports the view of Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958: 70). According to them, even the inactive members carefully observe their officers and stand ready to repudiate them at the time of election. It is found that electoral process in the SESU is a democratic one. We have already seen the frequency of electoral successes of the two major factions in the SESU after 1972.

#### Union Election in the CITU Union:

It is found that union elections in the CITU union in the multi-union plant is a formality. It seems that it is left to the plant level president of the CITU union whether to conduct the union election or not. Although every year the union holds elections, to elect office bearers, the old president continues to get elected for the same post year after year. The explanation of how one individual has been able to perpetuate himself as the president of CITU has

to be sought not only in the internal structure of the union but also outside the union organization. The outside factors such as the relationship between the management and the president and the president's rapport with the head office are important.

We have seen from the analysis of the history of the CITU union at Thomson Radiators that with the passage of time it has become a pro-management union. The union leader alligned himself with the management and has been able to perpetuate himself in the union. The rank and file do not dare oppose him because he has power to harrass them with the cooperation of the management. The following incident would explain how the management helped the union president, Shri A. Malai, in keeping his office in the CITU union.

During the course of the interview, the president of the CITU union informed that researcher of his skill and capability of keeping himself in the union office continuously since 1965, when he first assumed power in the union. He explained that around 1980, the members started questioning his continuation in office as the president. The members felt that they should have a new president. The president of the CITU union visualized that anyone who assumed office would not be able to solve the problems of the members of his union, for the new president might not have the same degree of access to the management as he himself had acquired

over the years. Keeping this fact in mind he stepped down and asked one of the members to assume the role of the president. True to the expectations of the former president the new president of the CITU union could not solve the problems of his members. The president, Shri A. Malai, informed the author that when this situation arose the members 'begged' him to assume presidentship of the CITU union again.

Here a question arises as to why the president, Shri A. Malai, was able to solve problems while others could not. It is because the management of Thomson Radiators enjoys certain advantages if a particular person continues in office. We have noted from the history of the CITU union that the president who was transferred to Jamshedpur plant in 1963 was again absorbed in Coimbatore plant with an understanding that if he was elected as the union leader again, he would cooperate with the management. The management by adopting a rigid attitude towards the new president indirectly indicated their preference for the old president, that is, Shri A. Malai. This kind of coalition between management and union leaders was noted by Indian scholars like Ramaswamy (1977: 121) Mamkoottam (1982: 91). The management of Thomson Radiators uses this coalition with the CITU union, to create an atmosphere of inter-union rivalry. When on certain occasions the unions held joint

meetings, the president did not agree to the proposals made during the meetings. This helps the management to show that there is no consensus among the unions and hence, they cannot entertain their proposals. The dissent of the CITU union president helped the management on some occasions. The role of the CITU union in the 1984 strike, to which we have referred earlier, reveals this relationship between the CITU union leadership and the management.

This coalition between the CITU union president, Shri A. Malai and the management explains why the new president of the CITU and other unions were not able to achieve anything concretely for the workers. Within the plant the CITU union is dominated by the president. The head office of the CITU seemingly supports the president in the interests of the party leaders and their party to which the CITU is affiliated. As soon as some members show active participation and attempt to acquire leadership of the local CITU, the supporters of the above said president discourage the new activists. The moment the plant leader comes to know that some new members are becoming popular in the union, he informs the head office. The leaders of the head office of the CITU, call the concerned persons and advise them not to become office bearers. The ostensible reason for such an advise is that the new leader would not be able to solve the problems with the management. Further, they are asked to

cooperate with the president, an experienced union leader. This way the leaders from the local office, head office of the CITU discourage the new activists from assuming leadership of the CITU union. From the study of Calcutta post unions Bogcart (1970: 108) found that in the National union of waterfront workers (NUWWF) the personal rapport of top leaders with the management, slowed down the growth of militant second-rank leadership.

According to our respondents, the CITU union hardly gives any sort of education to the members about the functioning of the union. The CITU union does not create a healthy climate where new members could get themselves educated for leadership in future. The members of the CITU feel that they are kept uninformed on the union matters.

The foregoing discussion reveals that the members of the CITU union in the plant did not have the freedom to elect their own leader, whom they could trust. But, instead, they were indirectly forced to elect a particular person as the president continuously for about 20 years. The forces which operate to perpetuate a particular individual as the president are as follows: (1) a small coterie of selfish followers of the president; (2) the authoritarian management which believes in divide-and-rule policy; and (3) the leaders of the head office. These groups enjoy certain advantages if a particular person continues as president of the CITU

local. None of these groups wants to be deprived of their advantages by changing the leader. In turn, each of these groups play their role to suppress factionalism or opposition in the union elections of the CITU local.

#### Union Election in the AITUC Union under Study:

The AITUC union at Thomson Radiators emerged in 1979 due to the oligarchic nature of the leadership of the CITU union. As we have shown in the previous chapter the AITUC union was formed by members who earlier belonged to the CITU the LPF and the INTUC unions. Contesting in the AITUC union is theoretically open to all the members of that union. Anyone can contest for the executive posts like president, secretary, treasurer etc. Even though there is no formal barrier to contest for any post in the union, it seemed that some leaders were keen on holding the same positions year after year.

At the time of the study, the president of the AITUC union of the Thomson Radiators was a sympathiser of the Janata Party. When the researcher asked him why he did not start a new union which owed allegiance to the Janata Party he said that, if he or anyone started a new union which was affiliated to the Janata Party not even a handful of members would join that union. He further said that in his view unions affiliated to the Communist Party (CPI) were serving the labour cause better than any other union

and it was for this reason that he wished to continue in the AITUC union. Further he reiterated that he was a sympathizer of the Janata Party and would continue to stand by that Party. This dual loyalty of the president shows that his political ideology was not in consonance with that of the party to which his union was affiliated. This indicates the degree of commitment of the leadership of the AITUC union. The presidentship of the AITUC union assured him of certain advantages, whereas his actual political loyalty lay elsewhere i.e., in the Janata Party.

The AITUC president showed keen interest in keeping the office. But he was unable to adopt the strategy of the CITU president owing to certain constraints. He evolved a different strategy, which mystified the role of a union leader. He said that a person interested in leadership should be well acquainted with the labour-management relations, industrial relations laws, and also should be bold enough to oppose the management. He said that his experience revealed the task of a labour leader was a difficult one. He told the workers that they did not know about the sufferings that the leaders underwent in dealing with the management and workers. He would tell the workers, who were interested in leadership, that members generally expect the leader to solve their problems immediately, and if perchance the leader fails to solve them instantly the leader becomes unpopular among the members. In effect, he

would tell the potential leaders that they run a high risk of becoming unpopular. In this manner he discouraged young and aspiring active members from contesting the elections for the president's post. This peculiar technique was used by the president of the AITUC union to make his members dependent on him. To a certain extent he has succeeded in his task. On the one hand he makes the members dependent on him and on the other hand indirectly discourages new leadership emerging from the rank and file in the AITUC union.

Unlike the CITU union leader who made himself indispensable to the management and the head office, the AITUC union president adopted a different strategy to perpetuate himself in the union office. The management did not show the same kind of interest as it did in the case of the CITU union leadership and the AITUC head office also did not extend the same support that the CITU head office extended to the CITU union leader. In this context the AITUC union president could hold on to his office only by making himself indispensable in the eyes of the workers. Although, the union election appears to be a democratic one, the analysis shows that the leader indirectly discourages new, emerging leadership. In essence, the AITUC union also exhibits characteristics of an oligarchic union. This analysis of union election in the CITU union and the AITUC union highlights the fact that union election is a mere



formality. A small group of people can get around the democratic process to perpetuate themselves. Studies conducted earlier (Ramaswamy 1977: 164; and Mamkoottam, 1982: 39) find that union election is a mere formality and special efforts have to be made to constitute a quorum merely to go through the ritual of unanimously re-electing the incumbents.

#### Union Election in the LPF Union:

The author observed that the members of the LPF union showed keen interest in electing committed worker leaders at the local level. All the members of the LPF union are eligible to contest for any post in the union. A member interested in contesting in the union election should submit his application through a prescribed form which is supplied by the head office. The cost of an application is Rs. 5. The author, during his field work, was invited to witness how the union election was conducted in the LPF union.

Before conducting the election all the previous office bearers were asked to resign from their posts. General Secretary of the head office, with an election officer (a member of LPF from other industry) conducted the election. The election committee gave the freedom to the members to decide whether they wanted to adopt the method of secret ballot; by raising of hands, or by unanimous choice. The majority of the members preferred voting by raising the hand.

This seemed to the investigator a democratic way of conducting the election because the members were given three alternative methods to choose from. It was observed that only 40 out of 90 members i.e., 45 per cent members of the LPF attended the election meeting and voted.

Now we will discuss democracy in the unions and its impact on members' participation. The analysis shows that the CITU local is oligarchic because it does not give the following opportunities to members: (a) to participate in decision-making; (b) to express themselves in the union meetings; (c) to become leaders of the union; and (d) to elect office bearers according to their preferences. The oligarchic nature is largely due to the leadership.

Among the unions studied in the multiple-union factory the AITUC also appears to occupy a place very close to oligarchic structure. Important decisions are taken by the union leaders, often, in consultation with the head office and the members of the union are asked to follow the decisions. The union, however, provides opportunities to the members to express their feelings in the GBMS. But the ultimate decision is taken by the leadership. We have observed that the members of the AITUC are discouraged by the existing union leaders to become leaders of the union. Based on these features we may assign the AITUC union a position that is closer to an oligarchic structure.

In contrast, the LPF union, as mentioned in the foregoing paragraph provides opportunities to participate in: (a) decision-making; (b) to discuss the issues at the union meetings; (c) to elect their union leaders according to their preferences; and (d) to decide the method by which they would elect their leaders. These features show that the LPF is a democratic union.

Like the LPF union, the SESU is also found to be democratic one. In the SESU the members are given full freedom to discuss issues and to contribute their ideas in decision-making. As we have shown in the history of the SESU the elections became democratic and formalized since 1972. The presence of the institutionalized factional conflict has made the SESU a democratic union.

The analysis of the government of different unions demonstrates a certain polarization of the unions. That is, the CITU and the AITUC unions are on the side of oligarchic government and the SESU and the LPF unions are on the side of democratic government. The oligarchic or democratic government of unions have implications for the levels of members' involvement in the union activities. When the members feel that they have: (a) freedom to discuss the issues; (b) freedom to make decision at union meetings; and (c) freedom to exercise their right in electing leaders of their choice, the rank and file is motivated to take active

part in the union activities.

Communications in the Unions:

Communication based on egalitarian norms in a trade union is a must for its effective performance. For example, without proper information about the date, place and time of the union meetings, even the interested or active members cannot attend the meeting. We cannot eliminate the possibility that communication and participation interact or that they both reflect the influence of still other variables. About the importance of communication Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958: 219) say that high membership control may put the members in a position to demand a steady flow of communication from the steward, and may also motivate them to participate in the union. The importance of information to union members cannot be overruled. Knowledge about his work situation, changes that take place in the job; actions or steps the union is about to engage in, vitally affect the member and are of corresponding interest to him. Knowledge about and ability to anticipate change gives the member a feeling of security he would lack if the changes came unexpectedly and were unexplained.

We shall investigate how communication takes place in the unions and how the meetings are conducted in the unions. Communication may be formal or informal. Further, communication flows in two ways; i.e., from leaders to members and

members to leaders.

Communication in the SESU Union:

The SESU with a long history has systematically evolved methods of communication. As the membership is large, most of the communication between the members and the leadership takes place in written form. The SESU has its own monthly magazine, Sanganatham which is an important medium of communication. Information at group level is communicated through the magazine and circulars. Information at plant level is communicated either on a notice board or verbally.

At Bimetal Bearings, the company notice board and the union notice board are installed in the factory compound. It was observed by the author during his field work that most of the members look forward to the notices on the board. It is found that the communication system in the SESU is formalized and no member can complain that he did not have access to information.

The GBM of a union provides forum for communication between the leadership and the rank and file. Information regarding GBMs is displayed on the union notice board. The members of the union are informed in advance so that all the members can make it convenient to attend the GBMs. The meetings are organized towards the end of the shift and start of the next shift. This enables the members who finish

the shift, as well as those who start the shift to attend the meetings. The management permits the union to hold the meeting during the shift time in the factory premise. This is one of the achievements of the SESU. We have already shown that the members have the right to dissent in the proceedings of the meetings.

Apart from this communication from leaders to members, communication also takes place from bottom to top. Whenever members face problems at the unit level they approach their group leaders and inform them about the problems. Due to the large size of the company, members generally do not meet the president of the SESU. But the group leaders or the representatives of the units convey the message to the president. This does not restrict anyone from meeting the president, if necessary.

#### Communication in the CITU Union:

Communication in the CITU union is predominantly informal. Occasionally the head office sends circular regarding meetings at the district level, rallies, processions etc. According to the respondents, in the CITU the leaders pass on the information in case the head office wants some representatives from the local to participate in the party or the union rally. At times the president himself nominates representatives for the said purpose, irrespective of their inclination.

Though GBMs could be used as important means for communication, in the CITU local it is found that the GBMs are a mere formality. When the meeting is scheduled, the president of the CITU does not circulate the notice regarding the meeting but informs whomever he meets. Usually the GBMs are conducted on Sundays at the head office. The head office of the CITU is situated in 'Ganapathy', a locality in the suburbs, 8 kms away from the factory.

The president of the union informs the members that they are supposed to go to the head office at 9.30 A.M. on the scheduled day. The members informed the scholar that when they go to the head office they do not find anyone around. The leaders of the CITU both from the local as well as head office come late for the meetings. After waiting for a long time, the workers are informed by the leader when he comes, that he had an important engagement at another place and hence the union meeting is postponed to the next Sunday. The members leave the union office disappointed.

In the following week, the attendance of the members naturally goes down. And it becomes difficult to make the workers attend the meetings frequently. Only those who are highly active and those who have some problems, go to the meeting. When the leader of the union finds low attendance, he tells the members to come on the following Sunday with more members or if they are unwilling to do that

they should write their specific problems on a piece of paper and hand it over to the leaders. Their problems would be taken care of. Further, the leaders say that they cannot devote most of their time to Thomson Radiators' workers, because they have to deal with a number of unions in Coimbatore. Some of the respondents reported that under these circumstances the members lose their interest in the union meetings. They also pointed out that the leaders of the union show little interest in the members. Some respondents informed that if the workers have some problem with the management then the union leaders approach the management on behalf of the workers to seek a solution. In the process the leaders often agree to a solution that is more favourable to the management than to the workers. According to some respondents, the union leaders resort to accepting 'bribes' from the management in exchange of their services. It seems that the union leaders give priority to the problems which in their view yield handsome returns from the management. This kind of observation is made by other scholars also (Uma Ramaswamy, 1983: 82 ). The CITU union leadership appears to be largely responsible for minimizing communication among the members. The CITU leadership seems to have failed to evolve a formal communication system. Nor does it seem to utilize informal channels of communication effectively. Apart from GBMs members also communicate verbally with their leaders, group leaders and president.



There are no hard and fast rules. But in practice it is observed even this kind of informal communication from members to the leaders rarely takes place.

#### Communication in the AITUC Union:

Like the CITU union, in the AITUC also it is found that a proper communication system is lacking. The president of the AITUC does not voluntarily pass information to the members. He expects the members to come to him for information. Once the author had the chance to observe how the AITUC union president treated his members when they approached him for some information. The information sent from the head office to be circulated among the members in the unit was not circulated by the president. The members of the AITUC came to know about this, and wanted the information in detail. The president of the AITUC told the members who came for the information that it was not connected to them and he kept the papers inside the table-drawer. The researcher asked the leader if the information was related to the union, why was the information not conveyed to the members. The leader said that if he provided the information to the members then he would lose importance. The leader further said that from his experience he found that if he maintained secrecy then the members would come again and again for information. The president thinks that by monopolizing all the information and by denying the

workers access to information, he can keep the workers dependent on him. He adopted a similar strategy in election also. Regarding the union meetings whenever problems arose the members of the AITUC informed the leaders of their union and the leadership convened the general body meetings. However, in the GBMs, the leader tends to dominate other members.

#### Communication System in the LPF:

Communication in the LPF union takes place formally as well as informally. The union sends a circular regarding the meetings. The president of the LPF informs the group leaders and in turn the group leaders take the information to the members. The author once had an opportunity to observe how communication takes place in the LPF. During lunch break when the members of the LPF were resting outside the factory, under a tree discussing some issues, the author also joined them. A few minutes later, a group leader came to them and circulated a paper and asked them to read and sign on a sheet of paper. The researcher enquired from the workers the reason for signing on the paper. Then they explained that by signing they acknowledged having received the information. The responsibility of communicating to workers is shared by different group leaders.

The GBMs are conducted either at the factory gate or at the head office which is located in North Coimbatore,

one km. away from the factory. The LPF members did not doubt the sincerity of their leaders. In the LPF union, members can either approach their respective group leaders for information or they can directly approach the president or secretary. There is no formal communication mechanism. This informal/flexible relation between leaders and members solved two way communication. That is, leaders can give information through circulars or verbally to members and the members can meet any of the leaders for information.

#### Leadership's Response to Members' Problems:

The basic aim of the trade union is to solve workers economic, social, and political problems. Webbs define the basic aim of the union as follows: trade union as a continuous association of wage earners, for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives (Webb and Webb, 1950: 1). A similar view was expressed by Pendse (1984: 342). To him the essential function of the trade union is to defend the existing rights of the workers and to further their interests. It is the united platform of the workers for intervention in the battle for control. It may be said that the nature of members' participation in the union activities is related to the number of functions it performs for its members. The primary aim of the union is to protect its members from the exploitation by the employer. This means the issues may be

related to wage, security of his job, welfare facilities etc. The members expect whenever they are in trouble, the union should give protection to them. From the organization studies it is found that the level of worker participation and involvement in a union depends on the benefits the workers hope to obtain from it (Mamkoottam, 1982: 105). All the unions have to tackle problems at two levels: (a) problems of the members as a whole (collective e.g., wage, bonus etc.); and (b) problems of the individual workers (e.g., overtime, production target, ill-treatment of a worker by supervisor etc.).

A trade union's approach in solving its members' problem is mostly based on the existing nature of the relationship between the union and the concerned management. In the beginning of this chapter, we have assumed that the democratic union does not generally align itself with the management. A democratic union struggles to solve the problems of the members to their satisfaction. On the other hand the oligarchic union aligns itself with the management. This leads to a give-and-take policy between the union and the management. Because of an understanding between an oligarchic union and the management, whenever, the workers find problems with the management, the union tends to ignore the interests of the workers at large. Instead, because of its coalition, it favours the management rather than the workers. We shall

investigate how different unions in our study solve their members' problems.

Leadership's Response to Members' Problems in the SESU Union:

It is found that whenever problems arise at the group level all the locals in different units of the Simpson group join together and take steps to solve them. Apart from the common problems, the SESU deals with the problems of the individual workers. Whenever an individual worker faces problems he brings his problems to the notice of the concerned group leaders. The group leaders take the problems to the management and try to solve them. To understand the attitude of the unions towards the problems of workers at individual level, we shall look at the specific problems reported by the workers and the union's response to these problems.

In the Bimetal Bearings a worker used to steal the finished bearings and sell it in the market. When the management came to know about this practice, they alerted the security personnel. One day during 1980, the worker stole a bearing piece and came out of the factory building. Someone gave this information to the security personnel and they waited for the worker who stole the bearing piece to come to the main gate. Before he could move towards the gate, one of his friends informed the worker that the security personnel were waiting for him at the gate.

Immediately the worker rushed towards the toilet and left the bearing inside the toilet room. The security personnel followed him there but they could not find the bearing piece with him. One of the security personnel went inside the toilet and found the bearing there. When the security officers accused him of stealing the bearing piece the worker denied his theft and said that the management unnecessarily harassed him.

The personnel manager was called and he asked the worker to admit the theft. Further, the management informed him that he would not be punished if he confessed his act. The worker refused to acknowledge his theft and stuck to his statement that he was not guilty. At this juncture the union intervened and requested the management to allow the union to investigate into the matter. The union also requested the management not to take any legal action on the worker till they completed their investigation. All the facts were gathered. Apparently the next day the worker admitted to the union leaders that he did steal the article. In the meantime the management immediately announced his suspension for about 10 days. The next day his dismissal order was prepared on disciplinary grounds and the dismissal order was sent by registered post to the residence of the worker. The union advised the member not to take delivery of any message from the management by post or by person. The

worker refused to receive any letter from the management.

Under these conditions, the management refused to employ the worker, who was alleged to have stolen the bearings. To solve the problem of the worker the trade union decided upon a strategy. The union asked the worker to resign voluntarily. This enabled the worker to get all the terminal benefits that a worker is entitled at the time of resignation. This saved the worker from legal action that the management was contemplating to start. The management wanted to get rid of the worker somehow and agreed to the union's proposal. Upon the advice of the union the worker resigned from his job. He did not have to face any legal action. Further, he got his terminal benefits from the management. This incident shows how the union tactfully helped the worker. Otherwise the worker would have lost all his retirement benefits and would have been taken to a court of law for legal action.

The leadership's Response to Members' Problems in the CITU Union:

Throughout the analysis we showed that the CITU union in the Thomson Radiators was a pro-management union. Instead of solving members' problems the union leadership was either indifferent or did not pursue the problems to their logical end. The CITU leadership was interested more in cooperating with the management than in solving the problems of the

workers. Number of incidents can be cited to demonstrate the pro-management leanings of the CITU union. We shall report a typical incident.

This is a case in which the union failed to solve the grievances of an individual worker. Ultimately the member himself solved it. The respondent who reported the incident, was working in the store department in the year 1980, with another worker who was also employed in the store as the store keeper. According to the respondent, the store keeper had stolen some material. The management levied a penalty on the store keeper and also on the respondent who was innocent. The respondent did not want to continue in the stores department because he thought this might happen again.

The respondent requested the works manager to transfer him from store department to some other department. On his request he was transferred to core-testing section. Within six months the respondent learned the trade and gave full production. Based on his production he was eligible to get the production-bonus as the other co-workers in the same section. However, he did not get the production-bonus. He met his union (CITU) leader and informed him of this and asked for the union's intervention in the matter.

According to the respondent, for about one year the union did not show interest in his complaint. The union did not give the member any answer for the unnecessary delay.



After the lapse of a year since the launching of his complaint the respondent decided to meet the concerned authority directly, because the union failed to solve his problem. He met the works manager and informed him of his problem. The works manager recommended the sanction of production-bonus to the respondent. In this case, the union failed to fulfil the need of its member. Hence, the member himself found a solution. The majority of the young workers in the union faced similar problems. The rank and file in the CITU was not satisfied with the leadership. This resulted in: (a) some workers deserting the union; and (b) some workers becoming apathetic. Vaid (1965: 3) from his study cites similar reasons for membership apathy.

#### The Leadership's Response to Members' Problems in the AITUC Union:

The AITUC union, unlike the CITU union shows interest in tackling the members' problems. It seems that the AITUC union tries to help the members in solving their problems. As we have shown in the history of trade unionism in the multiple union firm in our study, due to certain internal changes, after 1983 the union lost its militant attitude. It was in a dilemma whether to adopt radical or moderate methods in solving members' problems. Whenever the individuals had specific problems the union tried to help them through personal contact and informally rather than by formal methods.

To understand the AITUC union's policy towards collective problems we shall report an incident. During 1984 in the assembly section, all the workers decided to give only 34 units in 8 hours shift rather than 44 units required by the standing order. Workers from that department complained that the machine frame was not good and hence they could not produce 44 units. The management insisted that 44 pieces could be produced and to demonstrate this target could be achieved, the representatives of the Thomson management identified one temporary worker from that department and asked him to produce 44 units in 8 hours shift. He consulted his fellow workers in the department. They told him not to produce 44 units. Following his colleagues' advice, that day the worker did not produce as required by the standing order. The next day the works manager called him and informed him if he failed to produce 44 units he would be dismissed.

The worker approached his union (AITUC) for advice. The union leader asked the worker to produce 44 units. The union leader failed to recognize the collective problem of that department. He told the worker that his job was more important than the solidarity of his colleagues in that department. The worker accepted his union's advice and produced 44 units. As a result, the management issued a circular to all the workers of assembly section to the effect that they should produce 44 units and also they should

Leadership's Response to Members' Problems in the LPF Union:

Analysis of the history of union dynamics of the LPF revealed that to solve the member's problems the union had organized 15 days strike in the middle of 1984. One of the main issues of the strike was to demand the reinstatement of 15 dismissed workers. This explains the willingness of leaders to take up the problems of members' and to solve them. This fact was also attested by the AITUC leader in his interview quoted earlier. Apart from this, whenever the members face problems, the leaders are willing to take the individual problems to the management on behalf of the workers.

The analysis of the pattern of leadership's response to members' problems in different unions shows that oligarchic unions are likely to adopt strategies based on: (a) personalized approach; and (b) taking up only the 'safe' problems. The oligarchic unions would adopt moderate methods, on the other hand the democratic unions tend to adopt methods that are based on collective approach. The democratic unions resort to militant methods also to solve the problems if the moderate methods fail. The CITU union which was found to be an oligarchic union was least concerned about the members' grievances. The AITUC union was ready to take up the individual problems by adopting a personalized approach (personal contacts etc.) but tended to drop the collective

problems. For example the leadership of the AITUC union developed a negative attitude towards the grievances of the casual labourers who were the most vulnerable group. The SESU and the LPF unions were found to be democratic and both these unions were prepared to solve the members' grievances. Given this difference in the social organization of the four unions, participation of members in these trade unions tend to be different. Where the problems are heard and solved the participation tends to be high and where the problems are unheard and left unresolved the participation tends to be less.

### Conclusion:

In chapters IV and V we have attempted to find out the factors which promote or hinder members' participation in union activities. From chapter IV we have found out that the SESU and the LPF unions have developed antagonistic relation with their respective managements, the CITU union has pro-management leanings and finally the AITUC union is in a dilemma whether to be a pro-worker or pro-management union. Given this various types of union-management relations we have attempted to find out its influence on the social organization of the trade unions.

The analysis of the social organization of different unions under study reveals the following:

- (1) The SESU union which has evolved into a strong collective institution of the labour, established antagonistic relations with the management. Due to its antagonistic relations with the management as well as the established factionalism, the SESU union encourages the members to participate in: (a) decision-making at normal and crisis situations; (b) evolved a democratic procedure of union election by which members can elect union leaders of their choice without fear; (c) gives freedom to discuss, and dissent in the union meetings; (d) responds to members' problems to their satisfaction; and (e) makes information accessible to the members. In turn the democratic social organization of the SESU union induces members' participation in the union activities.
- (2) In the multiple union plant, the CITU union once was a militant union which entered into coalition with the management. The pro-management relations made the union to be undemocratic. In the CITU union: (a) the members are not given freedom to take decisions; (b) elections are generally undemocratic; (c) members are not given an opportunity to discuss or to give their dissent in the union meetings; (d) the members' problems are not solved effectively due to the pro-management leanings; and (e) information is not accessible to all members.

The pro-management leanings encourage oligarchic leadership which in turn discourages the members to participate in the union affairs actively.

- (3) The AITUC union which emerged as an alternative to the CITU union lost its militancy after 1983 agreement. It keeps changing its approach to deal with problems. It does not exhibit a consistent approach. Further:
- (a) the important decisions exclusively are taken by the leader, and members have a say only in the day-to-day affairs of the union;
  - (b) union elections seem to be democratic but the leaders show a keen desire to continue in the office. Because of this, the leaders indirectly discourage the new members to contest for leadership positions;
  - (c) individuals' problems are solved through personal influence and collective problems tend to be unsolved;
  - and (e) access to information is restricted. This peculiar type of social environment of the AITUC union places the social organization of the union very close to the oligarchic pattern. In the AITUC union it is found that the members are neither apathetic nor active in their union activities.
- (4) The LPF union has evolved conflict relations with the management. We have found that in the LPF union:
- (a) the members have freedom to take decision on all issues - normal and critical issues;
  - (b) the members

are free to elect leaders of their choice; (c) members' problems are heard and solved by adopting a collective approach; (d) members have freedom to discuss issues at union meetings and freedom to dissent; and (e) there is relatively more effective communication. The social organization of the LPF union resembles the social organization of the SESU union. The leadership in the LPF union is democratic. This particular social organization of the union is conducive for members' participation in union activities.

The analysis shows that union-management relations as they have evolved over a period of time influences the social organization of the trade unions. In this chapter we have attempted to find out why some unions elicit greater participation than others. It is found that mainly due to its prevailing pattern of social organization the particular union promotes or hinder members' participation in union activities. In the next chapter we shall examine the impact of the union-management relations and the social organizations of the union on the extent of members' participation in union activities.

## CHAPTER VI

### EXTENT OF MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE UNIONS UNDER STUDY

One of our objectives in this study is to find out what makes members participate in union affairs actively. In order to understand the social structural milieu that came into existence in the unions in our study, we have analysed the dynamics of unionism and the organization of the unions. The analysis shows that the SESU and the LPF unions evolved a collectivist approach and antagonistic relations with the management over a period of time, the CITU union adopted a personalized approach which resulted into a coalition with the management and the AITUC union could not evolve a consistent approach to workers' problems and in its relations with the management. We have seen that a particular type of union-management relations gives rise to a certain kind of social organization. The SESU and the LPF unions have become democratic, the CITU union has become oligarchic and the AITUC union, though exhibits shades of both oligarchic and democratic features, has moved closer to oligarchic structure.

Given the different types of union-management relations and the social organizations of the unions, we shall investigate their influence on the members' participation in union activities. In our theoretical framework we have assumed that the democratic setup of the trade unions is conducive for members' participation in union activities.



It enhances workers' participation. This theoretical view leads us to make the following hypotheses:

- (1) Democracy in the union and members' participation are positively related. Therefore, participation of the members in a democratic union is greater than the participation of members in an oligarchic union.
- (2) Participation of the members in a union which has antagonistic relations with the management tends to be greater than the participation of the members in the union which has pro-management leanings.
- (3) If the union has antagonistic relations with management then the participation of members will be greater during the crisis situation compared to the level of their participation in normal situations.
- (4) If the union has pro-management leanings, then participation of the members during the crisis situation will be lower compared to the level of their participation in normal situations.

In this chapter we shall investigate the extent of members' participation in various union activities in terms of some indices. We have classified the participation based on the context into (a) participation in normal situation; and (b) participation in crisis situation. This classification is necessary because the nature and extent

of participation varies in normal situations and in crisis situations. Most of the activities, except a few, included in this study are common to all the four unions. The method by which the computation of participation is arrived at is explained at the end of the discussion of all the items in this chapter.

Not all the members of the union participate in all the activities of the union. Hence, our objective is to find out in which activities most of the members in various unions participate.

(A) Participation during Normal Situations:

The following items are included in the activities of the unions during normal situations. They are: (1) paying annual subscription; (2) attending GBMs in the unions; (3) attending special GBMs in the unions; (4) asking questions in the union meetings; (5) answering the questions in the union meetings; (6) bringing grievances to the meetings; (7) dissent in the union meetings; (8) making motions; (9) holding positions in the union offices; (10) whether held positions in the past; (11) visiting union office; (12) reading notice board; (13) helping in membership drive; and (14) participation in union election. Now we shall investigate members' involvement in each of these activities of the unions in detail.

(1) Regular Payment of Subscription:

Paying the annual subscription is the minimum and an important requirement for membership in a union. Without paying the subscription fee, a worker cannot formally participate in union activities. However, he may participate informally which does not carry legitimacy. When the member pays his subscription fee he is eligible for claiming rights from the union and is liable for certain responsibilities as a member. Scholars like Sheth and Jain (1968a: 84) Ramaswamy (1977: 59) and Mamkootam (1982: 39) show that in India collecting membership dues is a difficult job and the same situation prevails even where only a single union exists. Repeated requests have to be made for collecting dues.

In this study, we consider paying the subscription as the minimum level of participation in unions. In this study data were collected on payment of subscription over the last five years till the time of the study. In our study regular payment of subscription includes: payment made promptly soon after the expiry of the period; (b) payment made after receiving reminders from the union office. The response of the workers is tabulated in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Regular Payment of Subscription.

Regular payment of subscription	Union				Total	
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators				
		SESU	CITU	AITUC		LPF
Yes	79 (98.8)	23 (95.8)	25 (100)	30 (100)	157 (98.7)	
No	1 (1.2)	1 (4.2)	-	-	2 (1.3)	
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)	

Table 6.1 shows that both in the AITUC and in the LPF, all the members paid their subscription fee regularly. In the CITU union 95.8 per cent members paid the subscription regularly and only one respondent in the CITU did not pay the dues regularly. In the SESU too, only one respondent did not pay the dues regularly during the last five years. Those respondents who were irregular in paying the subscription told that they were to be reminded for the payment of union dues.

## (2) Defaulters in the Unions under Study:

If the members do not make their subscription payment even after receiving repeated reminders, they are considered to be defaulters by the unions. The defaulters are not

permanent defaulters. We shall investigate whether any member has been defaulted by the union because of his failure to pay his subscription even after repeated reminders. Irregular payment of dues is different action compared to the act of completely stopping from paying it. Irregular payment means, the member may not pay it within the stipulated time, such members need repeated reminders to pay the subscription. But on the other hand, some members do not pay the union dues even after repeated requests. They however, pay their subscription fee intermittantly. In our study the number of defaulters is very small, i.e., 2.5 per cent in the SESU and 4.2 per cent in the CITU unions. It means that most of the members pay their subscription fees.

Sometimes, the union leaders, in their own interest, pay subscription fees on behalf of the workers. This was observed in the SESU union. According to the constitution of the SESU, only those who pay the subscription without any dues are eligible for voting in the union elections. During the union elections, union leaders approach the defaulting members and promise to pay their dues, and request them to cast their votes in their favour. A similar situation was found by another researcher (Mamkoottam 1982: 39) in his study. Because of this the defaulters again enter the union. By and large the members who pay their membership dues intermittantly remain inactive

members in the union or at the most participate at a level which is generally low.

### (3) Attending GBM (General Body Meeting) of the Union:

As mentioned in the previous chapter the union meetings are important because through them communication takes place between the leaders and the rank and file. It provides an opportunity for bringing grievances of members to the attention of the officers. The general body meeting provides an opportunity for the rank and file to participate in the decision-making. Scholars like (George Strauss 1959: 176; Sayles and Strauss 1953: 97; Sheth and Jain 1968a: 84; Ramaswamy, 1977: 164) show that in India as well as other countries union meetings are poorly attended. In our study data on the number of GBM's organized by each of the unions in the last one year (1984) were collected. The respondents were asked to mention as to how many GBMs they attended in the last one year. According to the information provided by the unions, the SESU did not conduct any GBM in 1984, the CITU conducted 6 GBMs, the AITUC conducted 6 GBMs and the LPF conducted 3 GBMs.

Table 6.2 shows that the CITU had conducted 6 GBMs during 1984. In the CITU, 16.7 per cent members did not attend any GBM. Another 58.3 per cent members attended less than 50 per cent of the GBMs conducted and only 25 per cent members attended more than 50 per cent of the GBMs conducted.

Finally, only 8.3 per cent members attended all the GBMs conducted.

Table 6.2: GBMs attended in last one year (1984).

Number of GBMs	Union			Total
	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
None	4 (16.7)	4 (16.0)	2 (6.7)	10 (12.7)
1	2 (8.3)	-	2 (6.7)	4 (5.1)
2	8 (33.3)	5 (20.0)	1 (3.3)	14 (17.72)
3	4 (16.7)	7 (28.0)	25 (83.3)	36 (45.56)
4	3 (12.5)	3 (12.0)	-	6 (7.6)
5	1 (4.2)	3 (12.0)	-	4 (5.1)
6	2 (8.3)	3 (12.0)	-	5 (6.3)
Total	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	79 (100.0)

Like the CITU, in the AITUC also 16 per cent members did not attend any GBM conducted during 1984. Another 48 percent members attended less than 50 per cent GBMs

conducted and 36 per cent members attended more than 50 per cent GBMs conducted. Findings show that 12 per cent members attended all the 6 GBMs conducted. The proportion of the members who attended all the GBMs in the AITUC is slightly more than the members of the CITU union.

In the LPF, only 6.7 per cent members did not attend any GBM conducted during last one year (1984). The proportion of the LPF members who did not attend any of the GBMs is less than the proportion of the CITU and the AITUC union members. It is found that in the LPF 83.3 per cent members attended all the GBMs conducted. The proportion of members who attended all the GBMs is significantly greater in the LPF than in the CITU and AITUC unions. Why this polarization?

The reason for this polarization is found in the social organization of the trade unions. We have found from the analysis of the social organization of different unions that the CITU and the AITUC do not provide opportunities to the members to share their feelings in the meetings. The CITU union was found undemocratic and the AITUC union was found to be inconsistent. The unions which do not provide equal opportunities for members to participate in GBMs discourage attendance in the GBM. The workers feel that when they would not be allowed to speak, there is no point in attending the meetings. So, the participation of members



in the GBMs is less. On the other hand, the LPF union was found to be democratic and gave equal opportunities to all the members to express themselves in the meetings. This is one of the important reasons for greater participation of members in the union meetings conducted by the LPF union. Hence, the participation of the LPF members in their union GBMs is greater than that of the AITUC and the CITU union members.

#### (4) Attending Special GBMs:

Special GBMs are convened during the emergency situations. A special GBM is convened to discuss more pressing issues on which decisions have to be made promptly with a view to take certain action. All the unions under study conducted special GBMs to take decisions. All the unions in Thomson Radiators convened GBMs during 1984 to decide upon the issue of strike. The SESU conducted 3 special GBMs, the CITU conducted 4 special GBMs, the AITUC conducted 4 special GBMs, and the LPF conducted 6 GBMs. We shall see the participation of members from various unions under study in special GBMs.

Table 6.3 shows that in the SESU, 11.2 per cent did not attend any special GBM; 15.0 per cent attended only 1 out of 3 special GBMs, 18.8 per cent attended 2 out of 3 special GBMs and finally 55 per cent attended all the special GBMs conducted.

Table 6.3: Members' Participation in Special GBMs during last year (1984)

GBMs	Union				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
		SESU	CITU	AITUC	
None	9 (11.2)	5 (20.8)	9 (36.0)	4 (13.3)	27 (17.0)
1	12 (15.0)	2 (8.3)	7 (28.0)	2 ( 6.7)	23 (14.5)
2	15 (18.8)	9 (37.5)	3 (12.0)	5 (16.7)	32 (20.0)
3	44 (55.0)	4 (16.7)	4 (16.0)	2 (6.7)	54 (34.0)
4	-	4 (16.7)	2 (8.0)	3 (10.0)	9 (5.7)
5	-	-	-	2 (6.6)	2 (1.3)
6	-	-	-	12 (40.0)	12 (7.5)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

In the CITU, 20.8 per cent did not attend any special GBM; 45.8 per cent attended less than 50 per cent special GBMs conducted; 33.4 per cent attended more than 50 per cent

special GBMs conducted during the last one year. Finally, 16.7 per cent of the members attended all the special GBMs which is slightly more than the attendance at the usual GBMs which we have seen earlier.

In the AITUC, 36 per cent did not attend any special GBM, 40 per cent attended less than 50 per cent special GBMs conducted, and finally only 8 per cent attended all the special GBMs conducted. In AITUC it was found that attendance in the special GBMs was lower than the ordinary meetings. An important reason for this is the attitude of different unions regarding the 1984 strike. In the Thomson Radiators the AITUC did not contribute any thing unique on its own. It waited for the CITU union to take a stand and then decided about the 1984 strike. Knowing this fact the members of the AITUC might have lost their interests in attending the special GBMs conducted regarding the strike issue.

In the LPF, 13.3 per cent did not attend any special GBM, 29.1 per cent attended less than 50 per cent special GBMs conducted. Finally, 56.7 per cent attended more than 50 per cent of the special GBMs conducted during 1984. It was found that the attendance of the members in the LPF in special GBMs was significantly lower than the normal meetings. One of the important reasons for drop in attendance of members of the LPF launching during the special GBMs was the divided opinion on the 1984 strike. Majority of the members opted for

strike and a minority group opted for peaceful method. Due to this, the minority group which was against the strike might not have attended the special GBMs which were meant for discussing the strike issue.

From the analysis it is found that all the members are not interested in all the meetings. The attendance in the meetings is based on the agenda of the meetings. If the agenda items do not concern a section of the membership they may opt out of meetings. Further, when opinion among the members gets divided on certain issues the individuals whose views are against the views of the majority, they feel disappointed and decide to ~~abstain~~ abstain from the union meetings.

#### Behaviour in the Union Meetings:

We have already explained that participation is not attitude but behaviour. We shall investigate what the members do in the meetings; whether the members sit and watch the proceedings passively or ask questions, make motions, and when their opinions differ from the majority, what do they do, i.e., whether they express their dissent or not. The active members give their dissent when they do not agree with certain resolutions or decisions.

(5) Asking Questions in the Union Meetings:

As we know that the union meetings are meant not only to pass the information from top to bottom, but also to obtain feedback from the members regarding their opinions, feelings and attitude on certain issues. The union meetings thus facilitate exchange of views and information between the leadership and the rank and file. The questions may be directed to the leadership or to an individual member attempting to make his point.

Table 6.4: Asking Questions in the Union Meetings

Asking questions	Union				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	50 (62.5)	8 (33.3)	12 (48.0)	17 (56.7)	87 (54.7)
No	30 (37.5)	16 (66.7)	13 (52.0)	13 (43.3)	72 (45.3)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.4 shows that among the four unions studied in the SESU and the LPF provide opportunities for the members to ask questions. That is why members' participation in asking question is significantly greater in the SESU and the

LPF than the participation of the members from the CITU and the AITUC in asking questions. Especially, in the CITU only 33.3 per cent members participated in asking questions and rest of the members did not ask questions in the union meetings.

From the analysis of the history of unionism and the social organizations of the unions we have found that both the SESU and the LPF have developed conflict relations with their managements and they are democratic unions. As democratic unions, both these unions encourage their members to express their views freely in the union meetings. But on the other hand, as we have seen earlier, the CITU and the AITUC are pro-management and oligarchic unions and they do not provide opportunities to members to ask questions. This is where the pro-worker, democratic unions and their members' participation differ from the pro-management, oligarchic unions and their members' participation. This supports our hypothesis that democracy in unions facilitates members' participation in union activities.

#### (6) Answering the questions in the Union Meetings:

When discussions on certain issues come up members are expected to participate by raising questions and answering them. Members' reactions to issues make the union meetings lively and interesting. The workers were asked whether they ever reacted in meetings held in the last 5 years.

The responses are presented in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5: Answering the Questions in the Meetings

Answering questions	Union				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
		CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	29 (36.2)	6 (25.0)	9 (36.0)	13 (43.3)	57 (35.8)
No	51 (63.8)	18 (75.0)	16 (64.0)	17 (56.7)	102 (64.2)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.5 shows that only 35.8 per cent members answered the questions during the meetings. Among the four unions the proportion of members who seemed to have participated by way of answering questions is more in the LPF (43.3 per cent) than in any other union. On the other hand, the proportion of members who seemed to have participated by way of answering questions is very less in the CITU (25 per cent) than in any other union. Again this supports our hypothesis that in the democratic union members feel free to ask questions and answer them but on the other hand in the oligarchic unions free discussion is suppressed.

(7) Giving Dissent in the Meetings:

Giving dissent to resolutions and decisions reflect workers' individual assessment of the issues. One may assume that only active members tend to disagree when they find their opinions are different from others. Generally opportunity for dissenting is given in the democratic unions and it is likely to be restricted or absent in the oligarchic unions. Sinha (1983: 49) in one of the unions he studied finds that the presence of the union leader in the meetings frightens the union members to the extent that they prefer to keep silent rather than express their opinions. We shall investigate the participation of members by their dissent given in the union meetings. The workers were asked whether they gave their dissent on any decision or resolution in the meetings during the last five years. The result is presented in table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Disagreeing in the union meetings.

Dissent	Union				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
		SESU	CITU	AITUC	
Yes	39 (48.8)	6 (25.0)	11 (44.0)	16 (53.3)	72 (45.3)
No	41 (51.2)	18 (75.0)	14 (56.0)	14 (46.7)	87 (54.7)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)



Among the unions under study 45.3 per cent members responded that they expressed their dissent in the union meetings when needed. The analysis shows that more members of the LPF gave dissent (53.3 per cent) compared to any other union. As in the other activities here also we find that proportionately less members of the CITU gave dissent (25 per cent) compared to any other union.

Disagreeing with the resolutions or decisions of the unions which are supported by the leadership means questioning the authority of the union leaders. We have portrayed the styles of leadership as they emerged in the unions in the history of unionism and the social organization of the unions. The pro-management CITU union did not allow the members to express dissent to resolutions brought out by union leadership. Further, the members were not ready to disagree openly with the union leadership because of the possibility of victimization by union with the help of the management. As George Strauss (1959: 184, 190) puts it, when the leader's relations with management are good the employer can support him by punishing his enemies and by giving better jobs to his friends. In a situation where the leader can retaliate against those who oppose him, few members would be willing to take the risk of opposing the leadership. The findings of our study are corroborated by the findings of Strauss (1959). On the other hand, the LPF

and the SESU unions give opportunities to the members to express themselves freely in the union meetings. This finding shows that proportion of members who make dissent in the union meeting is greater in the democratic union than in the oligarchic union.

(8) Making Motions;

Active members generally demonstrate their interest in a greater degree in the union meetings. One of the ways in which they show that they are active is by making motions, seconding motions etc. The workers in our study were asked whether they made motions or seconded the motions in the meetings during last five years.

Table 6.7: Making motions in the Union Meetings

Making motions	Union				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	28 (35.0)	6 (25.0)	10 (40.0)	9 (30.0)	53 (33.3)
No	52 (65.0)	18 (75.0)	15 (60.0)	21 (70.0)	106 (66.7)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

In all the unions only 33.3 per cent of the workers mentioned that they made motions or seconded the motions in the union meetings during last 5 years. The positive response the question on making motions ranges from 25 to 40 per cent. However, there is a slight difference among the unions but it is not significant.

(9) Bringing Grievances to the Meetings:

Union provides a forum to voice one's grievances if the leadership is sincere in listening to the grievances of the workers. The workers were asked to indicate whether during the last five years they brought any grievance to the union in a meeting. Grievances include issues such as (a) leave; (b) production; (c) quality of the product; and (d) supervisor's ill-treatment etc.

Table 6.8: Bringing Grievances to Unions

Brought grievances	Union				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
		SESU	CITU	AITUC	
Yes	49 (61.2)	17 (70.8)	15 (60.0)	22 (73.3)	103 (64.7)
No	31 (38.8)	7 (29.2)	10 (40.0)	8 (26.7)	56 (35.3)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.8 shows that in all the unions most of the members brought grievances to their unions. The responses ranged from 60 per cent to 73 per cent. Among the four unions studied, 70 per cent of the members of the CITU and the LPF unions brought grievances to the meetings atleast once during the last five years.

We will find out why this difference exists between the CITU and the LPF on one hand and the SESU and the AITUC on the other. The CITU union seems to have abandoned a collectivist approach in favour of individualistic approach. One may also add that it tried to exhibit favouritism. Since the CITU was pro-management union when the union approached the management to solve individual problems of the members the management cooperated with the union in solving them. These problems are of routine nature, like granting leave, getting credit etc. In the previous chapter we have found that the CITU did not show much interest in solving problems of individual members. It took up the problems of only some section of the members. Problems of those whom the leadership liked were solved. Problems of those whom the leadership did not like were not solved effectively or were ignored. However, irrespective of whether the leadership of the CITU and the AITUC unions solved the problems or not members brought grievances to the union. On the other hand the LPF responded to members

problems more sincerely. We have seen in the analysis of the social organization of the unions, the members of the LPF union found satisfaction in the union's attempt to solve the workers' grievances collectively. Due to the collectivist approach more members brought grievances to the LPF union. This analysis shows that the union which is close to the management tends to adopt an individualistic approach to solve the problems whereas the pro-worker union tends to adopt collectivist approach.

In the SESU, the proportion of members who brought grievances to the notice of the union is less compared to other unions. It is because of factionalism. There is a tendency on the part of the faction which is not controlling the union to assume that the ruling faction might not solve their problems and hence they do not generally bring the grievances to the union controlled by the rival faction. Also in the SESU the individual grievances are solved at the lower level. It may not come to the union leadership's notice to intervene to solve them.

So far, we have analysed the pattern of behaviour of the members in union meetings and we have found that the pattern of participation significantly varies from democratic union to oligarchic union. For example, in the democratic unions like the SESU and the LPF members actively participated in asking questions, answering them when needed gave their

dissent. On the other hand, we have noted that in the oligarchic unions like the AITUC and the CITU, the prevailing social organization does not seem to encourage the members to express themselves freely, discuss and to dissent. Due to the absence of democratic culture in the CITU and in the AITUC members prefer to keep silent rather than participate in the union meetings actively.

#### Holding Positions in the Union Office:

A person who aspires to hold some office in a union should be able to devote extra time and energy for union affairs if he succeeds in getting elected to the office. Generally, the active and committed members devote more time and energy to the unions and limit their time for personal and family matters. In our study we collected data on whether a worker ever held an office any time in the past five years. Table 6.9 presents data on whether workers ever held positions in the past five years.

Table 6.9: Held office in the past

Held office	Union				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	19 (23.8)	6 (25.0)	5 (20.0)	10 (33.3)	40 (25.2)
No	61 (76.2)	18 (75.0)	20 (80.0)	20 (66.7)	119 (74.8)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.9 shows that in all the unions only 25 per cent members held some positions during the last five years, the rest 75 per cent members did not hold any position. This indicates that a minority group has shown greater interest in holding the various official positions in the unions. However, there are inter-union differences with respect to the proportion of members who held offices. The proportion of members who held office in the past is more in the LPF union than that of the other unions. The LPF union seems to encourage potential leaders to a greater degree. On the other hand the AITUC union leadership discouraged new members to assume leadership responsibilities and hence, the proportion of members (20 per cent) who held office in the past is less than that of the any other unions. This analysis leads to the conclusion that in most of the unions a small portion of the active members tend to become office bearers.

(11) Holding Position at the Time of the Study:

We shall now investigate the proportion of members who held office at the time of study. The responses are presented in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10: Office holders in the four unions (at the time of study)

Holding office	Union				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	2 (2.5)	2 (8.3)	2 (8.0)	6 (20.0)	12 (7.5)
No	78 (97.5)	22 (91.7)	23 (92.0)	24 (80.0)	147 (92.5)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.10 shows that at the time of the study only 7.5 per cent members were in some positions and 92.5 per cent members kept themselves away from the offices. Except in the LPF, in all the unions, the proportion of members who held positions at the time of the study range from 2.5 per cent to 8 per cent. Further, it is found that in all the unions, except the LPF union, the respondents who were holding some union office at the time of the study also held positions in the past. In the case of the LPF union out of the six respondents, three respondents held positions in the union in the past. We may infer that the available positions are circulated among some members in the three unions and the rest of the majority is kept out of positions



in the unions.

(12) Visiting union Office:

Visiting the union office is one of the important aspects of the members' participation. Periodic visits to the union office keep the members informed about the new developments in the union affairs. But who are likely to visit the union office regularly? Generally, the active members visit the union office regularly. This analysis is not relevant for the SESU because it does not have an office at the Coimbatore branch. We asked the workers in Thomson Radiators how frequently they visited the union office during the last five years?

Table 6.11: Frequency of Visits to the Union office by Members under Study.

Visiting	Thomson Radiators Unions			Total
	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Never	2 (8.3)	7 (28.0)	4 (13.4)	13 (16.5)
Whenever problem arose	9 (37.5)	8 (32.0)	10 (33.3)	27 (34.1)
At the time of meetings	9 (37.5)	6 (24.0)	13 (43.3)	28 (35.4)
Once in a month	1 (4.2)	1 (4.0)	2 (6.7)	4 (5.1)
Twice in a month	2 (8.3)	-	-	2 (2.5)

contd.....

(Table 6.11 contd.....

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Weekly once	1 (4.2)	1 (4.0)	-	2 (2.5)
More than once in a week	-	2 (8.0)	1 (3.3)	3 (3.9)
Total	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	79 (100.0)

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Data in Table 6.11 show that 16.5 per cent members never visited their union, another 34.1 per cent members visited the union office whenever a problem arose; and 35.4 per cent visited during the meetings at their offices. This shows that majority of the members were not motivated to visit their union offices regularly. They visit the offices either when they face some problems or during the union meetings. The same pattern prevails in all the three unions under study.

### (13) Reading notice Board:

We have already noted in the case of the SESU that the notice board is used as a medium of communication. Although there is no office- premises of the union, union notice board is kept in the premises of the plant. In the multiple union plant no union had kept its own notice board in the plant premises. It may be because the union leadership did

not feel the necessity of having a notice board. Thus, the present analysis is applicable to only the SESU.

The SESU members were asked to indicate whether they usually read the notice board. Only 2.5 per cent said they did not read the notice board because they were illiterate. All others who could read and write mentioned that they read the notice board. This high level of workers' interest in reading the notice is due to the following reasons. First of all reading the notice board does not require special effort as other activities do. While going to the shift or coming out of the shift members spend a few minutes to look at the notice board. Secondly, it is a tradition in the SESU, that the leadership would pass on information to the rank and file through notices and circulars which would be displayed on the notice board. Thirdly, the factionalism induces the members to look for information. The members belonging to ruling faction want to know what their leaders are doing. On the other hand, the members who belong to opposite faction read the notice board to see if there is any information that goes against their factional interests. Hence, members of ruling faction and members of opposite faction read the notice board regularly.

(14) Involvement in Membership Drive: Enlisting new members to the union is one of the important activities of the union. This requires involvement of some workers in addition to

that of the leadership. Generally, an active member who is satisfied with his union participates in enlisting new members in his union. By canvassing for his union, he motivates the non-members as well as the members of other unions to join his union. Members who are satisfied with their union leaders and the social environment of the union talk about their union as the best one and go about convincing the potential new members to join their union. The workers were asked whether they involved themselves in membership drive during the last five years. This analysis is not applicable to the SESU because there is no rival union and all the workers except casual labourers are members. Hence, membership drive is not undertaken.

Table 6.12: Involvement in Membership Drive.

Membership drive	Thomson Radiators Unions			Total
	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	13 (54.2)	9 (36.0)	21 (70.0)	43 (54.4)
No	11 (45.8)	16 (64.0)	9 (30.0)	36 (45.6)
Total	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	79 (100.0)

Table 6.12 shows that 70 per cent of the LPF helped their union to enlist new members, in the CITU 54.2 per cent helped their union to enlist new members; and in the AITUC only 36 per cent did so. We may conclude that the members of the LPF are more satisfied with their union than is the case in other unions. Satisfied workers seem to take active part in strengthening the union numerically. Members of the AITUC seemed to be less interested in the membership drive.

(15) Union Election:

Union election is one of the very important activities. Election provides an opportunity to members of the unions to elect their own leaders and to unseat any leader whose work is unsatisfactory. The process of union election has two stages. One is electioneering in which members canvass for certain candidates and the act of casting one's vote. The workers were asked whether they have participated in canvassing during last union election.

Table 6.13: Participation in Electioneering Work.

Canvassing	Unions				Total
	Bimetal	Thomson Radiators			
	Bearings				
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	53 (66.2)	3 (12.5)	9 (36.0)	19 (63.3)	84 (52.8)
No	27 (33.8)	21 (87.5)	16 (64.0)	11 (36.7)	75 (47.2)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.13 shows that when all the unions are put together 52.8 per cent workers participated in electioneering work. Although nearly half of the workers participated in canvassing for some candidates, significant inter-union differences are noticed. Proportionately more members of the SESU and the LPF participated in electioneering than in the case of the CITU and the AITUC. We have found from the analysis of social organization of various unions that the union election procedures in the SESU and the LPF are democratic and in the AITUC and in the CITU undemocratic. This explains why comparatively more members of the SESU and the LPF are found to be active than those of the CITU and the AITUC in electioneering work.

(16) Voting:

As we have mentioned that voting by the members is one of the important aspects of union democracy. The mode of voting may be by hand-raising or vocal or secret ballot. Although the mode of voting is different, its main objective is the same everywhere, i.e., electing a popular leader. In our study workers were asked whether they had cast their votes in the last union election. The responses are presented in Table 6.14.

Table 6.14: Members' Participation in Voting in the last Union Election.

Voting	Unions				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	79 (98.8)	19 (79.2)	21 (84.0)	24 (80.0)	143 (89.9)
No	1 (1.2)	5 (20.8)	4 (16.0)	6 (20.0)	16 (10.1)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.14 shows that when all the unions are put together 89.9 per cent members cast their vote in the last union election. There is a significant difference

between the canvassing for the election and voting in the union election. Table 6.13 shows that only 52.8 per cent members participated in canvassing, but 89.9 per cent members participated in voting. It is explicit that only active members undertake canvassing, but voting is secret and does not involve showing open support to any particular group or a candidate. We find from this study that most of the members irrespective of their union participated in the union election. Participation by members in voting in the SESU was found to be very high (98.8 per cent). It was very well known that the factionalism in the SESU leads to a cut-throat competition among the factions; and the factions see to it that every one in their faction exercises his franchise in order to win the elections. In the case of oligarchic unions members seem to simply re-elect their old leaders.

#### Participation Index (Normal Period):

So far we have seen the members' involvement in the activities of their respective unions during the normal period. Our aim is to find out the extent of members' participation in their unions during the normal period in terms of high, medium and low levels of participation. As mentioned in chapter 2 we have calculated the index as follows. We assigned value 1 to each positive response and zero value for negative response. Some items like, General Body meeting, visiting union offices were assigned



6 value. For example, attendance in each GBM carries weight of 1 and non-attendance carries weight of zero. Depending on the number of GBMs conducted the maximum weightages are assigned. For instance, if a union organized a total of 6 GBMs, the item will have weightage of 6. If a union did not organize even a single GBM the item will have zero weightage. In the case of visiting union office the weightage is assigned in the following way. If a member visited the union office more than once in a week then he is assigned 6 points, weekly once 5 points; twice in a month 4 points; and if a member never visited his union office then he is assigned zero point. We then computed total score of each respondent on all items or indicators of participation by adding to the points that a worker scored on each of the items. Then the total score has been divided into three equal intervals. Thus, we have arrived at the three categories of the degree or extent of participation, i.e., high, medium and low levels. The cut-off points dividing low, medium and high levels have been shown in Table 2.2 in chapter II.

Table 6.15: Participation Index (during normal period)

Participation	Unions				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
		SESU	CITU	AITUC	
Low	6 (7.5)	8 (33.3)	8 (32.0)	6 (20.0)	28 (17.6)
Medium	38 (47.5)	13 (54.2)	14 (56.0)	12 (40.0)	77 (48.4)
High	36 (45.0)	3 (12.5)	3 (12.0)	12 (40.0)	54 (34.0)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

The data show that the CITU and the AITUC have less proportion of highly active members in comparison to the SESU and the LPF. The largest proportion of the SESU and the LPF members are prone more towards medium to high participation, whereas in the CITU and the AITUC members are more prone towards low to medium level participation. We may infer that during the normal period the members of the SESU and the LPF are more active than members of the CITU and the AITUC. Participation in various items discussed individually above also revealed that in terms of levels of participation the SESU and the LPF unions form one group and the AITUC and the CITU form another group. Table 6.15

shows the summary index of participation during the normal period. There is a certain degree of polarization among the unions. That is, the SESU and the LPF form one group and the CITU and the AITUC, another group.

(B) Participation During Crisis Situation:

During the crisis situation, members' active participation is a must, and without it, the union cannot demonstrate its numerical strength and bargaining power vis-a-vis the other unions and the management. No union desires to lose its popularity in front of other unions and management due to lack of its members' active participation. Hence, members' participation plays a vital role in making a union an effective bargaining agent. The following items are included to measure participation during crisis situation. They are:

- (1) involvement in preparing demand charter;
- (2) participation in negotiation with management;
- (3) participation in canvassing for strike;
- (4) participation in strike;
- (5) participation in picketing;
- (6) participation in gherao;
- (7) participation in go-slow;
- (8) participation in rejecting over time;
- and
- (9) participation in rejecting production incentive.

We shall now investigate the pattern of members' participation during crisis situation.

(1) Participation in Preparing Demand Charter:

In our study preparing demand charter is considered one of the activities of the unions during crisis situation. A demand charter is a document which contains the list of demands to be presented to the management. The charter forms the basis for negotiations and provides a rationale for any action - direct or indirect - on the part of the unions. In this study, workers were asked whether they participated in preparing demand charter during last five years. The responses are presented in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16: Participation in Preparing Demand Charter.

Demand charter	<u>Unions</u>				Total
	<u>Bimetal Bearings</u>	<u>Thomson Radiators</u>			
		SESU	CITU	AITUC	
Yes	55 (68.8)	14 (58.3)	17 (68.0)	23 (76.7)	109 (68.6)
No	25 (31.2)	10 (41.7)	8 (32.0)	7 (23.3)	50 (31.4)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.16 shows that 68.6 per cent members participated in preparing the demand charter. The analysis reveals that there is not much difference among the unions studied. Among the four unions, 76.7 per cent members from

the LPF union participated in preparing the demand charter. Around 68 per cent members from the SESU and the AITUC respectively participated in preparing the demand charter. The proportion of the CITU union members (58.3 per cent) who participated in preparing demand charter is less than that of the other three unions. Except this little variation, the majority of the members in the four unions stated that they participated in preparing demand charter. In reality the leaders of the respective unions prepare the demand charter and read out in the union GBM. The members either approve of the charter or disapprove of it depending on their perceptions. Sometimes, the members may modify the contents of the demand charter.

(2) Participation in negotiation with the Management:

Generally after preparing the demand charter the representatives, including plant level leaders and some active knowledgeable workers, go for negotiation with management. The workers were asked whether they have participated in the negotiation process with the management at any time during the last five years.

The data presented in Table 6.17 demonstrate that only 25 per cent workers from four unions participated in the negotiation process with the management. We have seen earlier that around one fourth of the members held positions in the unions. Here again, it is found that only around 1/4

Table 6.17: Participation in Negotiation.

Participation in negotiation	Unions				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	20 (25.0)	6 (25.0)	7 (28.0)	6 (20.0)	39 (24.5)
No	60 (75.0)	18 (75.0)	18 (72.0)	24 (80.0)	120 (75.5)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

of the members participated in negotiation process. It indicates that those who hold the positions are the ones who invariably participate in the negotiation process. Because participation in negotiation requires capability - knowledge of industrial legislations, persuasion and communication skills. If an incapable representative participates in the negotiation then results of the negotiation may go against the workers' interest. That is the reason why most of the members keep away from the activity of negotiation. Only the highly active, capable and experienced workers come forward to participate in negotiation. Hence, the majority of the members have to depend on a minority of articulate workers.

(13) Participation in Canvassing for Strike:

Union and management are two different interest groups. Union's interest does not coincide with the management's interests. As a consequence, there will always be scope for difference of opinion between these two groups on important issues like wage, bonus, working conditions, disciplinary matters, etc. Even though the interests of these two groups do not coincide with each other they have to cooperate to carry out production. In both the single-union firm and in the multiple-union firm, the unions organized strikes during 1984 which we have dealt in detail in the history and dynamics of unionism in the two units.

Before launching a strike active members and the leaders mobilize support and create a climate for strike. The union leadership and active members try to convince the workers of the necessity to go on a strike. The leadership adopts several ways of canvassing among members to mobilize their support. The active members discuss the issue with fellow members in their unions and members of other unions. However, the CITU and the AITUC in Thomson Radiators did not participate in the strike due to inter-union rivalries. Hence, this analysis is applicable only to the members of the SESU and the LPF. The members were asked whether they participated in canvassing for the last strike. Data on the participation in the strike relate to the latest strike that

was launched by the union. In the case of Thomson Radiators it was the 1984 strike, and in the case of the SESU union it was the 1983-84 strike.

Table 6.18: Participation in Canvassing for Strike.

Canvassing	Unions		Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators	
	SESU	LPF	
Yes	52 (65.0)	15 (50.0)	67 (60.91)
No	28 (35.0)	15 (50.0)	43 (39.11)
Total	80 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	110 (100.0)

Table 6.18 shows that 60.90 per cent participated in mobilizing and creating a climate for strike. The proportion of members who participated in canvassing for strike is more in the SESU union (65.0 per cent) than in the case of the LPF union (50.0 per cent). The proportion of members who participated in canvassing for strike is less in the LPF due to difference of opinions that emerged about the need for strike in 1984. The members who were against the strike did not canvass for the strike in 1984.



(4) Participation in Strike:

After the union gets majority approval from its members, it issues the strike notice to the management. A large proportion of members should participate in the strike to make it a success. Workers in our study were asked whether they participated in the last strike. As we have seen earlier, the CITU and the AITUC unions did not participate in strike. Hence, this analysis is applicable only to the SESU and the LPF unions. The responses are tabulated in Table 6.19.

Table 6.19: Participation in the last strike.

Participation in strike	Unions		
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators	Total
	SESU	LPF	
Yes	78 (97.5)	27 (90.0)	105 (95.5)
No	2 (2.5)	3 (10.0)	5 (4.5)
Total	80 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	110 (100.0)

Table 6.19 reveals that in the unions which went on strike i.e., the SESU and the LPF members' participation is as high

as 95.5 per cent. The analysis reveals that the members of the SESU and the LPF actively participated in the strike to demonstrate their solidarity and their power to realize their demands.

It is found that members' participation varies significantly between canvassing for strike and participation in the strike. Participation in strike is considered less offensive than participation in canvassing. When the strike is announced, almost all the members participate in it to show their solidarity. But in the case of canvassing, only those who are highly active and can mobilize workers for the strike participate in it. Canvassing for strike is considered more offensive than participation in strike by the management. To avoid victimization, generally workers avoid canvassing for the strike as the activity exposes the workers. Due to this reason members' participation in strike and canvassing for strike varies significantly.

#### (5) Participation in Picketing:

During the strike period the unions announce picketing at the factory gate. The purpose of picketing is to make the strike successful by preventing strike-breakers from entering the factory and to prevent the management to send the finished products to the market. Among the four unions only the SESU has announced picketing during the strikes in the past. Data on participation in picketing are not confined

to the last 1983-84 strike but for past five years.

Table 6.20: Participation in Picketing.

Sl. No.	Picketing	Percentage
1. Yes	26	32.5
2. No	54	67.5
Total	80	100.0

Table 6.20 shows that the proportion of members who participated in picketing is very low (32.5 per cent) in comparison to the proportion of members who participated in strike. Picketing is relatively more serious action. There is a possibility that the workers who take part in picketing may be directly identified by the management and may be victimized later. There is another possibility that the picketing - workers may be arrested by the police for 'violating' law and order. Due to these reasons when union announces strike, most of the members stop going to factory premises and only those who are highly active participate in picketing.

#### (6) Participation in Gherao:

Another form of direct action during strike period is gherao. Gherao is essentially used as a weapon to force the

management to decide on their demands. Members of the SESU union were asked whether they had participated in gherao at any time during the last five years.

The analysis of data shows that only 28.8 per cent had participated in gherao during the last five years. Gherao is considered to be more serious action than picketing. The aim of the gherao is to stop the management personnel from carrying out their day-to-day duties in the factory premise and force them to decide on the issues raised by the striking workers. The proportion of members who participated in gherao is very less due to the possibility of victimization by management and hence, only very active members participate in it.

(7) Participation in Go-Slow:

Go-slow tactics is less offensive method than any other strike tactics. The purpose of the go-slow is to indicate workers' resentment against the policies of the management. The union resorts to this action against the management by reducing the normal production. The members of all the unions were asked whether they had participated in the go-slow protest at any time during the past five years. This tactic was used only by the SESU union.

It was found that 76.3 per cent members of the SESU union had participated in go-slow action to show their

resentment. Instead of working to their maximum efficiency the workers reduced production on the basis of the decision of the union.

(8) Participation in Rejecting Overtime Work:

Rejecting overtime is also a less offensive method of opposing the management enmasse by the workers. It also affects production. As a consequence of workers' refusal to work overtime the management faces loss of production. This method was widely used by all the four unions studied. The workers were asked to indicate whether they had participated in rejecting overtime work at anytime during the last five years.

Table 6.21: Participation in Rejecting Overtime.

Rejecting overtime	Unions				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Yes	64 (80.0)	5 (20.8)	6 (24.0)	26 (86.7)	101 (63.5)
No	16 (20.0)	19 (79.2)	19 (76.0)	4 (13.3)	58 (36.5)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

In all the unions put together, 63.5 per cent members had participated in rejecting the overtime to show their resentment against the management's policies. A significant difference is found among the unions. The proportion of members who participated in rejecting overtime in the SESU is 80 per cent and in the LPF is 86.7 per cent. On the other hand, less than one-fourth members of the CITU (20.8 per cent) and the AITUC (24.0 per cent) participated in it.

(9) Participation in Rejecting Production Incentive:

Finally, we shall deal with the rejection of the production incentive as one of the methods of protest during crisis period. One should not confuse go-slow method with rejection of production incentive. According to go-slow method workers produce less than what they are normally expected to produce. When they reject production incentive they do not produce over and above the expected limit. From the workers point of view rejecting production incentive amounts a certain degree of monetary loss. When the workers resort to rejecting production incentive, management cannot take any disciplinary action against workers because they produce the minimum output required by their agreement.

Members of all the unions were asked whether they had participated in rejecting production incentive at anytime

during the last five years. This method was used only by the SESU union.

It was found that 80 per cent members indicated that they had participated in rejecting incentive production. We find that 20 per cent did not participate because of factional conflict in the SESU.

The analysis of participation during the crisis period by the SESU brings out an interesting feature. It is found that there is a negative relation between the degree of seriousness of the protest tactics employed and the degree of participation. It is found that the less serious the tactic the higher is the members' participation, and more serious the tactics the lower is the members' participation.

Table 6.22: Seriousness of the Protest-tactics and the Degree of Members Participation.

Sl. No.	Seriousness of protest-tactics used by the union	Participation in (Percentage)
1.	Strike	97.5
2.	Rejecting overtime, incentive production	80.0
3.	Go-slow	76.3
4.	Canvassing for strike	65.0
5.	Picketing	32.5
6.	<u>Gherao</u>	28.8

Table 6.22 shows that there is negative relation between the degree of seriousness of protest tactics and the proportion of members who participated in them. It is found that as high as 97.5 per cent participated in strike. But proportion starts declining as we go towards more serious actions. We find that in gherao only 28.8 per cent participated. As we have mentioned earlier the proportion of members who participated in strike is high because the workers stop working enmasse and the management generally cannot identify a particular worker to victimize. On the other hand, where picketing and gherao are concerned there are possibilities to identify the picketers. That is why in the protest tactics which are more serious only highly active members participate.

#### Summary Index of Participation during the Crisis Situation:

Our main objectives in this analysis is to find out

- (a) the difference between the extent of participation during normal and crisis situation in a particular union;
- (b) the difference between the extent of participation during crisis situation among the unions under study. To analyse the degree of members' participation during crisis situation, we have classified the extent of members' participation into four categories. They are: (a) inactive i.e., those who do not participate in any activities of the union during crisis situation; (b) low-level active; (c) moderately



active; and (d) highly active members.

Table 6.23: Summary index of Members' Participation during Crisis Situation.

Participation	Unions				Total
	<u>Bimetal Bearings</u>	Thomson Radiators			
		SESU	CITU	AITUC	
Inactive	1 (1.2)	9 (37.5)	8 (32.0)	2 (6.7)	20 (12.57)
Low level Actives	18 (22.5)	6 (25.0)	9 (36.0)	3 (10.0)	36 (22.64)
Moderately active	30 (37.5)	8 (33.3)	4 (16.0)	7 (23.3)	49 (30.81)
Highly active	31 (38.8)	1 (4.2)	4 (16.0)	18 (60.0)	54 (33.96)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.23 shows that two-third of the members in all the unions put together, are moderate to highly active participants in the union actions during crisis situation. Although we find that two third of the total members are active participants, significant inter-union differences are observed. The members of the CITU and the AITUC show similar levels of participation, i.e., two-third of them are low and inactive participants. In the CITU and the AITUC

37.5 per cent and 30.0 per cent respectively are inactive participants. Whereas in the LPF and the SESU only 6.7 per cent and 1.2 per cent are found to be inactive participants during the crisis situation. The proportion of moderate and highly active participants is more in the SESU (around 75 per cent) and the LPF (around 80 per cent) than the proportion of moderate and highly active participants in the case of the CITU (around 37 per cent) and the AITUC (around 32 percent ) during the crisis situation.

We have hypothesized earlier that during crisis situation participation of the members from the unions which have conflict relations is greater in comparison to the participation of the members from the unions which have pro-management relations. The analysis of participation in the activities during crisis situation of different unions under study corroborates this hypothesis. We have found that there is significant inter-union differences. The proportion of moderate and highly active participants from the union which have conflict relations (the SESU and the LPF) is more than the proportion of moderate and highly active participants from the unions which have pro-management relations (the CITU and the AITUC unions).

Also we have hypothesized that: (a) if the union has conflict relations with the management, then in comparison to normal situation the participation of the members will be

greater during the crisis situation; and (b) if the union has pro-management relations, then in comparison to normal situation participation of the members during the crisis situation will be lower. In order to verify these two hypotheses we have divided the activities of the unions into two (a) normal situation, and (b) crisis situation activities.

The analysis of members' participation in these two situations show that the first hypothesis is corroborated in the case of the LPF union only, and the hypothesis is not valid in the case of the SESU union. In the case of the SESU union the proportion of inactive and low-level active participants is 23.8 per cent (Table 6.23) during crisis situation. This proportion is more in comparison to the proportion of the low level participants 7.5 per cent (Table 6.15) in normal situation. This may be because of the factional conflict among the members. Due to factional conflict the members of opposite faction may not cooperate with the ruling faction during crisis situations. That is why a comparison of the participation of the members during normal and crisis situation shows that in the SESU union members' participation during the normal situation is greater than the members' participation during the crisis situation. On the other hand, the members' participation in the LPF during crisis situation is slightly higher 83.3 per cent (Table 6.23) than the members' participation

(80.0 per cent) during normal situation.

The second hypothesis is corroborated in the case of the two pro-management unions and their members' participation in union activities. It is found that the participation of the members from the CITU and the AITUC unions during the normal situation is greater (33.3 and 32.0 per cent low level participants respectively) than the participation of the members (62 and 68 per cent inactive and low level participants respectively) during the crisis situation.

The findings of this study suggest that members' participation in union activities increases during crisis situation if the union is a pro-worker and democratic provided the factional groups cooperate. Members' participation decreases during crisis situation if the union has pro-management leanings and oligarchic.

#### Summary Index of Participation in Activities in Normal and Crisis Periods:

Among the four unions studied the score given to members of each union varies according to number of activities in which workers participated. According to the activities (indices) the maximum score that a member of the CITU and the AITUC unions can obtain is 31, and the maximum score that a member of the LPF union can get is 32, and the maximum score that a member of the SESU union can obtain is 24. The total score points are divided into 3 equal

intervals. These three groups are divided into low medium and high levels of participation. According to the total points scored by workers, they are placed in one of the 3 groups, that is, low, medium and high participation. We shall compare the members in four unions in terms of the extent of their participation i.e., low, medium and high.

Table 6.24: Extent of Members' Participation in Unions under Study.

Participation	Unions				Total
	Bimetal Bearings	Thomson Radiators			
	SESU	CITU	AITUC	LPF	
Low	7 (8.8)	8 (33.3)	9 (36.0)	5 (16.7)	29 (18.2)
Medium	35 (43.8)	13 (54.2)	13 (52.0)	11 (36.7)	72 (45.3)
High	38 (47.4)	3 (12.5)	3 (12.0)	14 (46.6)	58 (36.5)
Total	80 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 6.24 shows the extent of members' participation in the unions under study. The analysis shows that the participation of the members from the CITU and the AITUC ranges from low to moderate level whereas the participation of the members of the SESU and the LPF ranges from moderate

to high level. Differences in the levels of participation indicates certain polarization among the unions. That is, the CITU and the AITUC unions form one group with low to medium participation and the SESU and the LPF unions form another group with medium to high participation.

Influence of Single or Multiple Unions on Extent of Members' Participation:

In order to find out whether single union, or multiple union situation per se influences levels of participation, we have tabulated extent of participation of the SESU members in Bimetal Bearings and the extent of participation of the members in the three unions in the Thomson Radiators together. Table 6.25 displays the extent of participation in the two industrial units.

Table 6.25: Extent of Members' Participation in Single and Multiple Unions.

Situation Participation	Unions		Total
	Single	Multiple	
Low	7 (8.8)	22 (27.8)	29 (8.2)
Medium	35 (43.8)	37 (46.8)	72 (45.3)
High	38 (47.4)	20 (25.4)	58 (36.5)
Total	80 (100.0)	79 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

It is clear from Table 6.25 that extent of participation in multiple-union firm is less compared to the single-union industry. In the multiple-union factory more than one-fourth of the workers are low-level participants whereas in the case of the single union, less than 10 per cent are low-level participants.

In the single-union factory, 81.3 per cent show moderate to high level of participation. In the case of the multiple-union industry 72.1 per cent show medium to high level participation. This may lead one to suggest that multiple unionism may discourage participation, but in our study we some how do not find strong evidence to suggest this tendency. This may be because in our study in the multiple union-factory out of the three unions one is democratic. Presence of at least one democratic union in the multiple union situation seems to provide opportunities for workers to participate in their union actively who may other wise become apathetic in a multiple-union situation riddled with rivalries between unions.

This finding suggest that single union, or multiple unions per se does not seem to influence levels of participation significantly. What appears to be important is the democratic or oligarchic structure of the union.

One of our main objectives in this analysis is to find out what makes the members to participate in the union

activities. The analysis of the activities of the four unions reveal that the degree of members' participation in the SESU and the LPF unions is greater than the members' participation in the CITU and the AITUC unions. To understand as to why the participation of members of the SESU and the LPF unions is significantly greater than the participation of the members of the CITU and the AITUC unions, we will have to refer back to our analysis of the history of unionism and the social organizations of the four unions under study.

Our analysis of the history of unionism reveals that the SESU and the LPF unions have developed conflict relations with their respective managements, the CITU union has developed pro-management relations and the AITUC union has shown some times pro-management and at other times pro-worker union according to the emerging situations. In effect, it has developed pro-management profile. Because of the pro-worker stance of the SESU and the LPF unions the workers take greater interest in their unions and hence exhibit higher levels of participation. Because of the pro-management stance of the CITU and the AITUC unions, the workers' participation in these two unions is not as high as it is in the case of the SESU and the LPF unions.

Further, our analysis of social organization of the unions revealed that the SESU and the LPF are democratic



unions, i.e., members are given freedom to participate in taking decisions, discuss things in the union meetings; elect their leaders of their choice; and the pattern of leadership is more democratic and helpful. This democratic atmosphere in these two unions is conducive for members' higher levels of participation. On the other hand, the CITU and the AITUC unions are undemocratic and the union leadership oligarchic. The situation that prevails in the CITU and the AITUC unions is opposite to the situation of the SESU and the LPF unions. Hence, the participation of the members is also found to be significantly lower in the CITU and the AITUC unions compared to the SESU and the LPF unions. It suggests that the atmosphere which prevails in the CITU and the AITUC unions is not conducive for members' active participation. The findings of this study support the hypothesis that a democracy in the union and members' participation are positively related.

To recapitulate, we carried out the analysis of the extent of participation in order to find out what makes the members to participate in the union activities. We attempted to find out the relationship between the pattern of participation in different union activities and the tradition created by history of union-management relations over a period of time and the existing social organization of the unions.

An interesting feature that emerged in the analysis is that even in the inactive, undemocratic and oligarchic unions participation of members is high in certain activities. We have identified some activities in which high level of participation was observed. For instance, in the CITU and the AITUC unions members' participation was found to be high in paying subscription, bringing grievances to unions, voting in the election and preparing demand charter. A closer look at these activities reveal that these are mild activities which do not involve any confrontation between workers and the union leader or between workers and the management. On the other hand members' participation is low in the CITU and the AITUC unions in activities like, attending GEMs; asking questions; answering questions; giving dissent; regular visit to union office; membership drive; and canvassing for certain candidates in the union election. Our findings suggest that members in these two unions have reservations to participate actively in their union affairs. They seem to participate actively in the activities which require minimal involvement and are a mere formality, or which do not involve any risk. Their participation is low in activities which lead to difference of opinions, confrontation with their union leaders and where they run the risk of being victimized by the management. The less serious the implications of an action the greater is the participation by the members in the CITU and the AITUC unions.

In the case of the active, democratic unions like the SESU and the LPF also, members' participation is low in certain activities. For example, in the case of the SESU union, members' participation is very low in the activities like gherao and picketing. In the case of the LPF union regular visits to union office is at low-level. Especially, from the analysis of the SESU union it is found that even in the active union only highly active participants take part in the activities which are risky.

Although we find high participation by members of the CITU and the AITUC unions in certain activities and low participation by members of the SESU and the LPF unions it does not change the overall extent of members' participation in their union activities. The extent of members' participation in the CITU and the AITUC unions low to moderate and in the case of the SESU and the LPF unions it is moderate to high.

This finding suggests that democracy in the unions facilitates or enhances members' participation in union activities. If a union has developed conflict relations with the management then it is more likely that it is a democratic and its members' participation tends to be high. If a union has pro-management leanings, it is more likely to be oligarchic and members' participation tends to be low. In the pro-management unions, members' participation

tends to be lower during crisis situation compared to the normal period. On the other hand, in pro-worker unions the participation of the members tends to be high during crisis situation compared to the normal period, provided the factional groups cooperate with each other. That is, in pro-worker democratic unions, members tend to show their solidarity during crisis situation also whereas in the case of the pro-management and oligarchic unions, the members do not seem to show their solidarity in crisis situations. It may be because the workers doubt the convictions and integrity of the oligarchic leaders. In the next chapter we shall see the influence of socio-economic background of the members on extent of participation in union activities.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE MEMBERS AND EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION IN UNION ACTIVITIES

One of our research questions is to find out why do some unions elicit greater participation than others? For this purpose, we have analysed the history of union-management relations, social organization of the unions and their impact on extent of members' participation in union activities. We have found that largely due to democratic government of the union, leadership's response to members' grievances, inter-union relations and existing pattern of union-management relations, some unions elicit greater participation than other unions.

Analysis of extent of membership participation in union activities has shown that the participation of majority of the members in the democratic unions is greater than the participation of the majority of the members in the oligarchic unions. That is, in the SESU and in the LPF unions participation of majority of the members is found to be medium to high level. In contrast, in the CITU and in the AITUC unions participation of majority of the members is found to be medium to low. In other words, the democratic unions encourage participation by the majority of the members irrespective of their socio-economic background, whereas the oligarchic unions discourage participation of the majority of the workers. However, we have noticed that a

minority of workers (10.90 per cent) in the democratic unions are low-level participants. In contrast a minority of workers (12.20 per cent) in the oligarchic unions are high-level participants. It seems the low-level participation of minority workers in the democratic unions is due to socio-economic background. And in the case of oligarchic unions the high-level participation of a minority of workers is due to their socio-economic background as well as their close association with leadership.

In order to demonstrate this trend we shall carry out analysis in two stages: (a) first we shall analyse the relationship between socio-economic background variables and levels of participation without making any distinction between the structure of the unions (democratic/oligarchic) to which the workers belong. This will show us whether there exists any relationship between level of participation and socio-economic background variables; and (b) then we shall select variables which seem to influence the extent of participation and then control for the structure of the union (democratic/oligarchic) to see the influence of the structure on participation. This will show us whether or not the socio-economic background variables per se influence the levels of participation.

As a first step we shall analyse the relationship between the levels of participation and the socio-economic

background variables. In this study socio-economic background of workers includes the following: age; education; religion; caste; civil status; size of the household; types of family; rural-urban background; migration status of the workers; mode of recruitment; job-security; experience in the present factory; ideological leanings; composition of the neighbourhood; distance between place of work and residence; mode of commuting to work; and income from job as well as other sources. Now we shall investigate the influence of the socio-economic background variables on members' participation in union activities.

Based on the levels of participation - low, medium, high, the workers are divided into three groups. The background variables are cross-tabulated with levels of participation.

#### Age and Extent of Participation in Union Activities:

There is a controversy regarding the relationship between the age of the workers and the extent of their participation in trade unions. Scholars like Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958: 116), Sheth (1969: 288) and Murphy (1981:232) found that there is a significant relation between the age of the workers and their participation in union activities. On the other hand studies conducted by Sharma (1971: 347), Sharan (1978: 121), Sinha (1983: 53) and Joseph (1985: 289) revealed that there is no significant association between

the age of the members and the extent of their participation. In this study we shall examine whether the age influences the extent of participation in union activities.

Table 7.1: Age of the workers and extent of participation in union Activities.

Participa- tion	Age							Total
	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	
Low	5 (45.5)	6 (14.3)	9 (25.0)	1 (4.2)	3 (9.4)	2 (20.0)	3 (75.0)	29 (18.2)
Medium	4 (36.3)	26 (61.9)	13 (36.1)	11 (45.8)	13 (40.6)	4 (40.0)	1 (25.0)	72 (45.3)
High	2 (18.2)	10 (23.8)	14 (38.9)	12 (50.0)	16 (50.0)	4 (40.0)	-	58 (36.5)
Total	11 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	32 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Chi-square = 28.01; df. = 12;  $p < .01$

Table 7.1 shows that there is no linear relationship between age and participation. The participation gradually increases with age upto a certain point and then decreases. In other words, the extent of participation reaches its peak when the worker is in his middle age and then decreases. Participation of members in the age group 21 to 35 is found to be low to medium level. The participation of members in



the age group 36 to 50 is found to be medium to high level and then level of participation decreases. That is, the participation of members in the age group 51 and above is found to be low to medium.

Our study shows that participation of middle-age group (36-50) is higher than the participation of workers who are young (21-35) and those who are old (51 + ). Participation of older workers decreases slowly and reaches a point of low participation. No older worker is found in highly active group. Finally, compared to old workers, the participation of the young members is higher.

It is found that the age of the individual influences the level of his participation in union activities. Now we shall investigate the nature of influence of age on the participation of members in democratic and oligarchic unions.

Table 7.2: Age, structure of the union and Extent of Participation.

Structure Age	<u>Democratic Unions</u>				<u>Oligarchic Unions</u>			
	21-35	36-50	51 +	Total	21-35	36-50	51 +	Total
Participation								
Low	8 (12.9)	2 (4.44)	2 (66.66)	12 (10.90)	12 (44.44)	4 (19.04)	1 (100.0)	17 (34.7)
Medium	31 (50.0)	14 (31.11)	1 (3.33)	46 (41.80)	12 (44.44)	14 (66.66)	-	26 (53.1)

Contd.....

(Table 7.2 contd.....)

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High	23	29	-	52	3	3	-	6
	(37.09)	(64.44)		(47.30)	(11.11)	(14.28)		(12.2)

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Total	62	45	3	110	27	21	1	49
	(100.0)	(100.0)	100.0	(100.0)	100.0	(100.0)	100.0	(100.0)

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In the democratic unions, the majority of the workers are medium to high-level participants irrespective of their age. However, among the minority of low level participants those who are old (however, in absolute number they are only 2) and very young workers are more in number.

In the case of oligarchic unions, the majority of the workers are low to medium-level participants irrespective of their age. However, in case of the minority of highly active participants middle-aged and young workers are proportionately more.

Now these findings call for explanation as to why the participation of middle-aged workers is higher than young or older workers? In the labour surplus industrial economy where the avenues of employment are few, the young workers enter factory employment as temporary or casual workers. Temporary status does not confer certain benefits which the permanent status confers on a worker. He would attempt to become a permanent worker whereby he will gain job

security and certain other benefits. Hence, the temporary status places some serious constraints on their activities irrespective of whether their union is oligarchic or democratic. If a temporary worker displeases the management he cannot achieve his goal of becoming permanent worker and he may even be fired. As a result, the young workers tend to be very cautious in their trade union activities to avoid wrath of the management. The old workers who have put in long years of work in the service of a company, do not feel that they can achieve anything more than what they have already achieved. Further, the realization on the part of the old workers that they will be retiring from employment keeps them away from active participation irrespective of whether their union is democratic or oligarchic. The middle-aged members who have job-security and have gained experience in industry, tend to have career aspirations, and they realize that their participation in the union would help them to further their prospects. In oligarchic unions, in spite of the constraints placed by the structure of the union, because of their job-security, middle-aged workers tend to take active part.

#### Education and Extent of Participation:

Education plays a vital role in modern life. Education makes men to be aware of their rights and responsibilities which in turn makes them participate in the trade unions more

actively. Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958: 116-117) who studied the four Michigan unions found that in one of the unions formal education was positively associated with participation. Sharan (1985: 129) and Sinha (1983: 53) found that formal education is positively related to participation in union activities. On the other hand, Sheth (1969: 292), Sharma (1971: 345) found no relation between these two variables. It is clear that while some studies suggest that education influences the members' participation in union activities, other studies suggest the opposite. We shall investigate whether the education plays any role in influencing the participation of the members in unions.

Table 7.3: Education and Extent of Members' Participation.

Education Participation	Illiterate	Primary School (1-5)*	Middle School (6-8)	Secondary School (9-11)	College (12 +)	Total
Low	2 (100.0)	6 (54.5)	7 (20.6)	13 (12.7)	1 (10.0)	29 (18.2)
Medium	-	4 (36.4)	18 (52.9)	45 (44.2)	5 (50.0)	72 (45.3)
High	-	1 (9.1)	9 (26.5)	44 (43.1)	4 (40.0)	58 (36.5)
Total	2 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	34 (100.0)	102 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

\* Number of years of education.

Chi-square = 26.37; df. = 12; p < .01

Table 7.4: Education, Structure of union and Extent of Members' Participation

Structure	Democratic Unions						Oligarchic Unions					
Education	Illit-Prima-Midd-Second-College			Total			Illit-Prim-Middle High			Total		
Participation	erate ry	le ary	ol scho-Scho-School	erate ry	le ary	ol scho-Scho-School	erate ry	le ary	ol scho-Scho-School	erate ry	le ary	ol scho-Scho-School
Low	1 (100.0)	3 (75.0)	2 (14.2)	6 (7.32)	- (10.90)	12 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	3 (42.9)	5 (25.0)	7 (35.0)	1 (100.0)	17 (34.7)
Medium	-	-	6 (42.9)	35 (42.68)	5 (55.55)	46 (41.80)	-	4 (57.1)	12 (60.0)	10 (50.0)	-	26 (53.1)
High	-	1 (25.0)	6 (42.9)	41 (50.0)	4 (45.45)	52 (47.30)	-	-	3 (15.0)	3 (15.0)	-	6 (12.2)
Total	1 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	82 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	49 (100.0)

In the democratic unions, the majority of the workers are medium to high-level participants irrespective of the level of education. However, among the minority of low-level participants those who are illiterate and have education below primary school level are more in number.

In the case of oligarchic unions, the majority of the workers are low to medium level participants irrespective of their level of education. In case of the minority of active participants members who have middle and high school level education are more in number.

#### Religion and Extent of Participation:

Previous studies conducted by scholars like Sheth (1969), Sharan (1978), Sinha (1983), and Joseph (1985) did not include religion in their investigations on workers' participation in trade unions. However, Sharma (1971: 345) who studied the workers in automobile industry found that there is no relation between religion and participation. The existing literature suggests that there is no relation between these two variables. We shall hypothesise there is no relation between religion and extent of members' participation and investigate whether this hypothesis is supported or refused.

Table 7.5: Religion and Extent of Members' Participation.

Participation	Religion			Total
	Hindus	Christians	Muslims	
Low	23 (18.2)	5 (18.5)	1 (20.0)	29 (18.2)
Medium	60 (47.2)	10 (37.0)	2 (40.0)	72 (45.3)
High	44 (34.6)	12 (44.5)	2 (40.0)	58 (36.5)
Total	127 (100.0)	27 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 7.5 shows that there is no significant relation between religion and extent of members' participation in trade union activities. It is found that workers at various levels of participation are more or less uniformly distributed in all religious groups. This finding supports the findings of other studies and also our hypothesis that there is no relationship between these two variables.

#### Caste and Extent of Participation:

In India caste is considered to be an important institution which affects every sphere of life. Even in urban areas, caste loyalties seem to play an important role.

This has been suggested by some studies on recruitment of industrial labour (Harissb, 1982: 994; Palaniswamy, 1984:249). In the case of trade unions caste loyalties may promote workers to follow a leader who also belongs to their caste. Regarding the influence of caste on participation, Sheth (1969: 294-45) found negative relation, scholars like Sharma (1971: 345), Sinha (1983: 58) and Sahay and Sinha (1985: 278-79) and Joseph (1985: 289) found that there is no correlation between caste and members' participation in union activities. We shall investigate, in this study, whether caste influences members' participation. In this analysis Christians, Muslims and some respondents who refused to disclose their caste identity are excluded. Rest of the local caste groups are classified into three broad categories; (a) Brahmin, (b) non-Brahmin; and (c) Adi-Dravida (scheduled castes).

Table 7.6: Different caste groups and Extent of Members' Participation.

Participation	Castes			Total
	Brahmin	Non-Brahmin	Adi-Dravida	
Low	1 (9.1)	19 (18.3)	3 (30.0)	23 (18.4)
Medium	6 (54.5)	48 (46.2)	4 (40.0)	58 (46.4)
High	4 (36.4)	37 (35.5)	3 (30.0)	44 (35.2)
Total	11 (100.0)	104 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	125 (100.0)



From Table 7.6 it appears that caste does not have significant influence on members' participation. But among the Adi-Dravida caste group members, proportionately more workers are at low level of participation than workers from either Brahmin caste or non-Brahmin caste groups. Except this small variation, workers with various degrees of participation are more or less equally distributed in all caste groups. One's caste may still be important in securing employment as revealed in the background of the workers. However, its influence on trade union activities seems to be insignificant in our study.

#### Civil Status of the Members and Extent of Participation:

The majority of the studies conducted in India (Sheth, 1969: 293; Arya 1982: 121; Sinha, 1983: 53; and Sahay and Sinha, 1985: 279) found that there is no relationship between marital status and participation. However, Sharma (1974: 120) found that participation was high among the married workers. In this study we shall explore the relationship between these two variables.

Table 7.7 shows that among the members who are married, only 16.1 per cent are low-level participants. Rest of the members are moderate to high-level participants (41.9 per cent each). Among the unmarried members most of them are low to moderate participants (25.7 and 57.1 per cent each respectively).

Table 7.7: Civil Status of Members and Extent of their Participation.

Participation	Civil Status		Total
	Married	Un-married	
Low	20 ( 6.2 )	9 (25.7)	29 (18.2)
Medium	52 (41.9)	20 (57.2)	72 (45.3)
High	52 (41.9)	6 (17.1)	58 (36.5)
Total	124 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Chi-square = 7.36; df. = 2;  $p < .05$

We shall now analyse whether the marital status influences participation in the democratic and oligarchic unions differently.

Table 7.8: Civil Status, Structure of union and Extent of Members' Participation.

Structure	Democratic Unions			Oligarchic Unions		
Civil Status	Married	Un-married	Total	Married	Un-married	Total
Participation						
Low	7 (8.3)	5 (19.2)	12 (10.9)	13 (32.5)	4 (44.4)	17 (34.7)
Medium	31 (36.9)	15 (57.7)	46 (41.8)	21 (52.5)	5 (55.6)	26 (53.1)
High	46 (54.8)	16 (23.1)	52 (47.3)	6 (15.0)	-	6 (12.2)
Total	84 (100.0)	26 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	49 (100.0)

In democratic unions, the majority of both married and unmarried workers are moderate to high-level participants. Among the minority of low-level participants in democratic unions, unmarried workers are more in numbers.

In oligarchic unions the majority of married and unmarried workers are low to medium level participants. In the case of the oligarchic unions, the minority of active workers are those who are married. In fact high-level participants are confined to the group of married workers in oligarchic unions.

It is found that the participation of married workers is higher than the participation of the unmarried workers irrespective of the structure of the union. It may be because the majority of the married workers are also those who are relatively more experienced and have permanent jobs. These factors help the minority of active married workers in the oligarchic unions to participate in the union affairs.

Size of the Household and Extent of Participation:

Size of the household is defined as small size household if it has less than 3 members; medium size household if it has 4 to 6 members; and large size household if it has more than 7 members. Sheth (1969: 294) found that members from large size household participate in the union activities more actively than members who belong to small size household. On the other hand, Sharma (1971: 347) found that there is no relationship between size of the household and members' participation. We shall investigate whether there is any relationship between the size of the household and participation in our study.

Table 7.9: Size of household and Extent of Members' Participation.

Participation	Size of household			Total
	Small 0-3*	Medium 4-6	Large 7 +	
Low	8 (17.0)	19 (18.6)	2 (20.0)	29 (18.2)
Medium	24 (51.1)	42 (41.2)	6 (60.0)	72 (45.3)
High	15 (31.9)	41 (40.2)	2 (20.0)	58 (36.5)
Total	47 (100.0)	102 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

\* Members

Chi-Square = 2.66; df. = 4;  $p < .01$ 

Among the respondents from small size household 17.0: per cent are low-level participants; 51.1 per cent of them are medium level participants and 31.9 per cent of them are high-level participants. Among the workers from medium size households 18.6: per cent of them are at low-level participation; 41.2 and 40.2 per cent of the workers are moderate and high level participants, respectively. Among the respondents who have large size households, 60 per cent of the members are moderate level participants and rest of the members are low and high-level participants ( i.e., 20 per cent each).

Table 7.10: Size of household, Structure of the union and Extent of Members' Participation.

Structure  Size of household	Democratic Unions				Oligarchic Unions			
	Small	Medium	Large	Total	Small	Medium	Large	Total
Partici- pation								
Low	4 (11.8)	6 (9.0)	2 (22.2)	12 (10.9)	4 (30.8)	13 (37.1)	-	17 (34.7)
Medium	16 (47.0)	25 (37.3)	5 (55.6)	46 (41.8)	8 (61.5)	17 (48.6)	1 (100.0)	26 (53.1)
High	14 (41.2)	36 (53.7)	2 (22.2)	52 (47.3)	1 (7.7)	5 (14.3)	-	6 (12.2)
Total	34 (100.0)	67 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	49 (100.0)

In democratic unions, the majority of the workers are medium to high-level participants irrespective of the size of their households. However, among the minority of low-level participants, those who live in large size households are more in number. It seems that the large size household inhibits greater participation even if the union is democratic.

In the case of oligarchic unions, the majority of the workers are low to medium-level participants irrespective of the size of the households. In the case of the minority of highly active participants members who have medium size

households are more in number.

We may infer that workers with large size households tend to participate less than those who have small and medium size households. This may be, because the members who have large-size households have more responsibilities towards their families than the members who are from small as well as medium size households. Another factor may be that one's involvement in trade unions may displease the management and pose a threat to the job. Thus, the members who have large-size household may feel reluctant to take part in the union affairs actively.

#### Types of Family and Extent of Participation:

The studies which we have referred above (Sheth 1969, Sharma, 1971, Arya, 1982, Sharan, 1985) did not take this variable into account to find out its influence on members' participation. In this study we shall examine the relation between types of family and extent of participation in union activities. We have divided the family into three types: (a) single person household, where the respondent alone lives; (b) neuclear family, where husband, wife, and their unmarried children live; and (c) joint family where husband wife, their married sons and their families and close relatives live.

Table 7.11: Types of family and Extent of Members' Participation.

Participation	Types of family			Total
	Single person household	Neuclear family	Joint family	
Low	2 (18.1)	18 (17.3)	9 (20.5)	29 (18.2)
Medium	5 (45.5)	46 (44.2)	21 (47.7)	72 (45.3)
High	4 (36.4)	40 (38.5)	14 (31.8)	58 (36.5)
Total	11 (100.0)	104 (100.0)	44 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 7.11 shows that there is no relationship between different types of family to which workers belong and their levels of participation. Workers with various degrees of participation are more or less uniformly distributed in different types of family background. Here we may suggest that it is the size of the household that is more important in influencing participation than the composition of the household. A joint family need not necessarily be a large size household.



### Rural-urban Background of Workers and Extent of Participation:

A person's upbringing in rural or urban environment may mold a person's behaviour and thought which in turn might create a certain attitude towards work and his participation in workers' organization. Studies conducted in other countries (Tannenbaum and Kahn 1958: 115; Spinrad, 1960: 239; Stinchcombe, 1965: 152; and Vall 1970: 156) found workers who have urban background are more active than the workers from rural background. On the other hand, studies conducted in India (Sharma 1971: 345; Sinha 1983: 53; and Joseph 1985: 289) found no relationship between rural/urban background and members' participation.

In our study, 33.3 per cent workers were born in villages; 17.6 per cent in towns; and 49.1 per cent in cities. But some of the workers in their childhood migrated to cities along with their parents and were brought up mostly in the city environment. From the survey of literature it is found that in the Indian context rural-urban background does not influence the members' participation in union activities. We shall find out if the upbringing has any influence on members' participation.

Table 7.12 Rural-urban background and Extent of members' Participation.

Participation	Rural-urban Background			Total
	Village	Town	City	
Low	8 (25.8)	6 (23.0)	15 (14.7)	29 (18.2)
Medium	16 (51.6)	8 (30.8)	48 (47.1)	72 (45.3)
High	7 (22.6)	12 (46.2)	39 (38.2)	58 (36.5)
Total	31 (100.0)	26 (100.0)	102 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 7.12 shows that three-fourths of the members who are from village background are found to be low to moderate-level participants. On the other hand, three-fourths of the workers who are from urban (town as well as city) background are moderate to high-level participants. Our study suggests that the level of participation of workers who have urban background is higher than participation of workers who have rural background.

#### Distance of Migration and Extent of Participation:

In our study a migrant is defined as one who lived elsewhere before moving to the city of Coimbatore. This means that a worker's status as a migrant or non-migrant is based on place of last residence. Based on the place of last

residence, the workers are grouped into the following categories: (a) those who lived outside Coimbatore city but within the Coimbatore taluk, (b) those who lived outside Coimbatore taluk but within Coimbatore district; (c) those who lived in other districts of Tamil Nadu, and (d) those who migrated from other states of India. The available study (Baviskar, 1968: 305) on migration and participation suggests that migrant workers belonging to the minority castes were the first to join the union in large numbers and constituted the hard-core supporters of the unions. This leads us to assume that the workers who are away from Coimbatore locality may participate in union activities more actively than the workers from Coimbatore area.

Table 7.13: Distance of Migration and Extent of Members' Participation.

Distance of Migra- tion  Parti- cipation	Coimba- tore and Suburbs	Coimba- tore Taluk	Coimba- tore District	Other Distri- cts of Tamil Nadu	Other States of India	Total
Low	14 (26.9)	5 (33.3)	2 (22.2)	4 (6.3)	4 (20.0)	29 (18.2)
Medium	27 (51.9)	7 (46.7)	5 (55.6)	27 (42.9)	6 (30.0)	72 (45.3)
High	11 (21.2)	3 (20.0)	2 (22.2)	32 (50.8)	10 (50.0)	58 (36.5)
Total	52 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	63 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table No. 7.13 shows that workers from Coimbatore city and suburbs, Coimbatore taluk, and Coimbatore district are mostly medium-level participants. Workers from other districts of Tamil Nadu and the workers from other states of India are high-level participants. That is, participation of the workers who are from outside Coimbatore area is higher than the participation of workers from Coimbatore district. The plausible explanation for this behaviour among workers lies in the fact that migrant workers in the absence of kinsmen, and other traditional institutions in a new place tend to depend on their unions for security and realization of the collective spirit.

#### Types of Recruitment and Extent of Participation:

Studies conducted in India (Sharan, 1978: 72-75; Tiemann, 1980: 392-393; Hadimani, 1981: 6; Chaudhuri and Barman, 1981: 17-120; and Palaniswamy, 1984: 248) suggest that informal methods of recruitment - through friends, relatives, former workmen in the enterprise as well as higher authority of the enterprise - seem to be popularly employed by the employers. But none of the studies, except for Murphy's study of textile mill workers of South India, has considered the influence of the type of recruitment and its influence on participation in trade unions. Murphy (1981: 232) finds that the mills which recruited their workers through a rationalised system of recruitment by mill officers rather

than through the jobbers, seemed to have produced the strongest unions. In this study we shall explore the relationship between the two.

Table 7.14: Type of Recruitment and Extent of Members' Participation.

Types of Recruitment Participation	Informal methods	Formal methods			Total
		Direct applica- tions	Employment Exchange	News paper	
Low	24 (22.9)	3 (12.5)	2 (7.4)	-	29 (18.2)
Medium	44 (41.9)	10 (41.7)	17 (63.0)	1 (33.3)	72 (45.3)
High	37 (35.2)	11 (45.8)	8 (29.6)	2 (66.7)	58 (36.5)
Total	105 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	27 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

In our study workers were asked to indicate as to how they secured employment in the present factory. Table 7.14 shows that 66 per cent of the respondents have been recruited through informal methods and rest of the respondents were recruited through formal methods. A difference is found in the levels of participation of workers who were recruited through formal and informal methods. Proportionately more of those who were recruited on the basis of informal

methods are low-level participants (22.9 per cent). On the other hand, participation of the workers who were recruited through formal methods is higher. Majority of the workers who were recruited through formal methods are moderate to highly active participants (45 to 66 per cent).

Those who were recruited through informal methods are generally found to be moderate participants. It may be because they are obliged to the workers/persons who helped them to obtain the present job by acting according to their advice. Hence, they may hesitate to take part in the union affairs actively whereas those who were recruited through formal methods are not obliged to any one in the factory or outside. This enables them to decide their role in the union activities. From this study it is found that participation of members who were recruited through formal methods is higher than the members who were recruited through informal methods.

#### Job-Security and Extent of Participation:

Job security is one of the very important variables which significantly affects the members' participation in union activities. Very few studies have taken into account the security of job and its influence on members' participation in union activities. There is no consensus on whether job security promotes active participation or not. Sharan (1978; 127) in her study finds that those who have secure jobs take more active part in the union activities than the

workers who do not have secure jobs. But on the contrary, Sinha (1983: 48) finds that job-insecurity induces participation in union activities. In our study we shall explore whether job-security plays any role in influencing members' participation in union activities.

In our study job-security is defined in terms of permanent or temporary/casual work status. Those who hold permanent tenure are the one's whose jobs are secure. All those who hold temporary or casual tenures are those who have insecure jobs.

Table 7.15: Job security and Extent of Members' Participation.

Job-Security	Temporary	Permanent	Total
Participation			
Low	8 (26.7)	21 (16.3)	29 (18.2)
Medium	17 (56.7)	55 (42.6)	72 (45.3)
High	5 (16.6)	53 (41.1)	58 (36.5)
Total	30 (100.0)	129 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Chi-Square = 6.47; df. = 2;  $p < .05$ .

Table 7.15 shows that those who have secure jobs are highly participative than those who have temporary, insecure

jobs. Among the temporary and casual labourers around 80 percent are at low to medium levels. On the other hand, among the workers who are permanent, around 80 percent are at medium to high levels of participation.

Table 7.16: Job security, Structure of union and Extent of Members' Participation.

Structure	Democratic			Oligarchic		
	Temporary	Permanent	Total	Temporary	Permanent	Total
Job-security Participation						
Low	5 (21.7)	7 (8.0)	12 (10.9)	3 (42.9)	14 (33.3)	17 (34.7)
Medium	13 (56.6)	33 (37.9)	46 (41.8)	4 (57.1)	22 (52.4)	26 (53.1)
High	5 (21.7)	47 (54.1)	52 (47.3)	-	6 (14.3)	6 (12.2)
Total	23 (100.0)	87 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	49 (100.0)

Table 7.16 shows that in the democratic unions, the majority of the workers are medium to high level participants, irrespective of security of jobs. However, in the case of minority low-level participants, those who do not have security of job (temporary workers) are found to be more in number. It seems, lack of job security inhibits greater participation.



In the case of oligarchic unions, the majority of the workers are low to medium level participants irrespective of security of jobs. However, the minority of highly active participants are the one's who have security of job.

As mentioned earlier, in a labour surplus industrial economy the workers without security of job may be reluctant to participate in union activities even if the union is a democratic union. Also we have found earlier that the young workers are found to be less active members than the workers from middle-age group. Usually the young workers also work as temporary or casual labourers. Lack of experience and lack of security of job, make them reluctant to participate in the union activities even the democratic unions provide them opportunity to participate in the union activities. In oligarchic unions even the opportunities do not exist for all the workers but it exists for a section of the workers who may be closely alligned with the leadership.

#### Length of service in the Present Factory and Extent of Participation:

One's length of service in the particular factory, greatly influences his participation in union activities. The more the experience, the more mature the worker becomes in terms of understanding the industrial system and the union dynamics. Scholars like (Sharma 1971; 348; Glick et al. 1977; 149; Arya, 1982; 121) found that length of service

is positively related with the extent of participation. On the other hand, (Sheth, 1969; 290; Sharan 1978; 126; and Sinha, 1983; 53) found that length of service has no influence on members' participation in union activities. Since there is no consensus regarding length of service and participation, we shall explore its relationship in our study.

Table 7.17: Length of service and Extent of Members' Participation.

Participation	Service						Total
	-5*	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	
Low	6 (30.0)	10 (20.4)	3 (15.0)	6 (18.8)	4 (12.1)	-	29 (18.2)
Medium	12 (60.0)	24 (49.0)	8 (40.0)	8 (25.0)	17 (51.5)	3 (60.0)	72 (45.3)
High	2 (10.0)	15 (30.6)	9 (45.0)	18 (56.2)	12 (36.4)	2 (40.0)	58 (36.5)
Total	20 (100.0)	49 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	32 (100.0)	33 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

\* In years.

Chi-Square = 16.15; df. = 10;  $p < .01$

Table 7.17 shows that there is a relation between length of service and extent of members' participation. It is found that with the increase in one's length of service

the degree of members' participation also increases. The participation of members who have experience ranging from 11 to 20 years is higher than those who have less than 10 years or more than 20 years of service. Since length of one's service plays vital role in influencing members' participation we shall explore its impact on participation in democratic and oligarchic unions separately.

Table 7.18: Length of service, Structure of union and Extent of Members' Participation.

Structure	Democratic Unions				Oligarchic Unions			
Service	1-10*	11-20	21-30	Total	1-10	11-20	21-30	Total
Parti- cipation								
Low	7 (15.3)	4 (9.8)	1 (3.1)	12 (10.9)	9 (39.2)	5 (45.4)	3 (20.1)	17 (34.7)
Medium	24 (52.1)	12 (29.3)	10 (30.3)	46 (41.8)	12 (52.2)	4 (36.4)	10 (66.6)	26 (53.1)
High	15 (32.6)	25 (60.9)	22 (66.6)	52 (47.3)	2 (8.6)	2 (18.2)	2 (33.3)	6 (12.2)
Total	46 (100.0)	41 (100.0)	33 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	49 (100.0)

\* In years.

Table 7.18 shows that a majority of the workers in democratic unions are medium to high level participants irrespective of the length of their service. However, in the

case of the minority low level participants those who have less than 10 years service are more in number.

In the case of oligarchic unions, the majority of the workers are low to medium level participants, irrespective of length of the service. However, in the case of the minority of active participants members who have 11 to 20 years service are more among the high level participants. It appears that length of service does not alone influence the participation of members. Along with length of service, age of the workers, security of job together influence the members' participation. Earlier we have found that participation of workers who are in the middle age group as well as who are holding permanent tenure is higher than the participation of workers who are young and those who hold temporary tenure. However, some workers who had spent very long years of their working life may not participate actively. This is related to their old age. They may withdraw from union activities and concentrate on their retirement plans.

#### Class Identification and Extent of Participation:

The survey of literature reveals that studies conducted in the Indian context (Sheth 1969; Sharma, 1971; Sharan 1978; Arya 1982; Sinha 1983; and Joseph 1985) have not taken into account the members' class identification and its influence on participation. However, studies conducted in some of the other countries (Purcell, 1953: 211-212; Tagliacozz

and Seidman, 1956: 547-550; Seidman et al. 1958: 256-258 and Spinrad, 1960: 243) have found that the active unionist views his work group or the working class or both as a significant reference group. Whether he does or does not have a combative attitude towards management, the activist is class conscious, that is, he sees himself as a worker, and tends to perceive industrial disputes from the vantage point of the workers rather than from the point of management. In this study we shall examine whether class identification has any influence on the extent of members' participation. In our study workers were asked to indicate whether they identify themselves as members of working class, middle class or upper class.

Table 7.19: Class identification and Extent of Members' Participation.

Class Identi- fication	Working class	Middle class	Upper class	Total
Partici- pation				
Low	28 (20.1)	1 (5.3)	-	29 (18.2)
Medium	62 (44.6)	10 (52.6)	-	72 (45.3)
High	49 (35.3)	8 (42.1)	1 (100.0)	58 (36.5)
Total	139 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 7.19 shows that 139 respondents identify themselves as the members of working class; 19 workers identified themselves with the middle class; and only one worker claimed that he belonged to upper class. It is observed that nearly 87 per cent of the workers who identified themselves as working class members are medium to high level participants. On the other hand, those who identified themselves as middle class members 19 workers are at medium to high-level participation. However, we should note that in absolute terms those who considered themselves as members of middle class are only 19 persons. It appears from this study the majority of the workers are conscious of the fact that they are members of the working class. This consciousness is a necessary condition for participation in the union activities. It may not, however, be a sufficient condition for active participation. In addition to being conscious, a worker must have some degree of economic strength to participate in the union activities.

#### Political Leanings of the Members and Extent of their Participation:

As we have found from the review of literature that Indian trade unions have close connections with political parties since the inception of labour movement. Sheth and Jain (1968), Ramaswamy (1977) have found that members' involvement in political parties increases the extent of

participation in union activities. However, Sharma (1971: 346) have found that political activities of the members do not influence their participation in union activities. We shall explore in this study whether the political leanings of the members influence the extent of their participation in unions.

Table 7.20: Political leanings of the Members and Extent of Participation.

Political leanings	Congr- ess(I)	Janata	CPI(M)	CPI	DMK	AIADMK	None	Total
Participi- ation								
Low	1 (5.0)	-	3 (18.8)	1 (14.3)	14 (25.0)	4 (21.1)	6 (16.7)	29 (18.2)
Medium	10 (50.0)	3 (60.0)	8 (50.0)	4 (57.1)	19 (33.8)	9 (47.3)	19 (52.7)	72 (45.3)
High	9 (45.0)	2 (40.0)	5 (31.2)	2 (28.6)	23 (41.2)	6 (31.6)	11 (30.6)	58 (36.5)
Total	20 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	16 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 7.20 shows that workers in our study are sympathizers of several political parties. Supporters of different political parties are distributed in the four unions in our study. Cross-tabulation of levels of their participation with their political sympathies reveals that

in the low participation group, members who are sympathizers of the DMK and the AIADMK (two important regional parties in Tamil Nadu) are found to be proportionately more (25 and 21 per cent each). It should be mentioned here that the supporters of the DMK and the AIADMK party are distributed in all the unions. Other than this small variation the political leanings of the members do not seem to influence their participation in union activities to a great extent. Workers with various degrees of participation are more or less uniformly distributed among sympathizers of various political parties.

#### Composition of Neighbourhood and Extent of Participation:

The studies conducted in India, cited earlier in this chapter, did not take into account the environment where the worker lives and its influence on participation. Spinrad (1960: 239) is of the opinion that where one lives (or has lived) appears to be associated with participation in the union. In our study the environment where one lives is taken to be his neighbourhood and its composition. In this study we shall examine whether the neighbourhood composition influences the participation of the members in union activities.



Table 7.21: Composition of neighbourhood and Extent of Members' Participation.

Neighbour- hood Partici- pation	Factory workers	Non- factory workers	Factory and non- factory workers	Business communi- ties	Office goers	Total
Low	11 (13.6)	10 (28.6)	4 (16.7)	1 (11.2)	3 (30.0)	29 (18.2)
Medium	37 (45.7)	14 (40.0)	15 (62.5)	4 (44.4)	2 (20.0)	72 (45.3)
High	33 (40.7)	11 (31.4)	5 (20.8)	4 (44.4)	5 (50.0)	58 (36.5)
Total	81 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 7.21 shows that eighty one workers live in the neighbourhoods predominantly occupied by factory workers followed by 35 respondents live in neighbourhoods occupied by non-factory workers; and twenty four live in neighbourhoods inhabited by a combination of these two groups. Only nine workers live in neighbourhoods where predominantly business community lives, and another 10 workers live where predominantly office goers live.

Now we shall find out whether the neighbourhood composition has influence on members' participation. The analysis shows that participation of workers who are from

the neighbourhoods predominantly occupied by factory workers is higher than the participation of workers who are either from the neighbourhoods predominantly occupied by non-factory workers or predominantly occupied by both these two groups. It appears that the working class neighbourhood facilitates communication among workers. That is, they seem to devote some of their leisure time to discuss issues connected to their workplace. This may increase their awareness and enhance their participation.

Workmate and/or Union Member as Neighbour and Extent of Participation:

As we have stated earlier, the studies which were conducted in India did not show any interest in finding out the influence of workmate, and/or union member as neighbour and its impact on members' participation. However, studies conducted in other countries (Sayles and Strauss 1953:202; Dean 1954: 51; Spinrad 1960: 240) found that workmates who live close by tend to be more active in their unions. We shall explore in this study the relationship between the workmate union members as their neighbours and their influence on participation.

Table 7.22: Workmate and union members as neighbourhood and Extent of Members' participation.

Neighbour- hood Partici- pation	Work- mate	Others	Total	Respon- dents union members	Others	Total
Low	23 (17.4)	6 (22.2)	29 (18.2)	16 (14.6)	3 (26.5)	29 (18.2)
Medium	59 (44.7)	13 (48.1)	72 (45.3)	44 (40.0)	28 (57.4)	72 (45.3)
High	50 (37.9)	8 (29.7)	58 (36.5)	50 (45.4)	8 (16.1)	58 (36.5)
Total	132 (100.0)	27 (100.0)	159 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	49 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table 7.22 shows that: (a) there is a difference between participation of workers who live in the neighbourhoods inhabited by their workmates and others, and who do not do so; and (b) difference between participation of workers who live in the same neighbourhoods as members of his union and others who do not do so; (c) finally there is a difference between the participation of workers who live closer to their workmates and workers who live in the same neighbourhoods as other members of his union.

The study shows that participation of members who live nearer to their workmates is higher than the participation

of workers who do not live nearer their workmates. In the same way participation of workers who live closer to their union members is higher than the participation of workers who do not do so. Finally, when we compare the participation of workers who live nearer to their workmates and workers who live nearer to their union members participation of workers who live closer to their union members is higher than the participation of worker who live closer to their workmates.

Distance between place of Work and Place of Residence and Extent of Participation:

Studies conducted in other countries (Miller and Young, 1955: 41; Purcell, 1953: 203-204; Seidman et al. 1958: 187; and Spinrad, 1960: 240) found that unionists insist that the great distance between their homes and the union hall is partly responsible for their inactivity. In this study we shall explore whether the distance between residence and factory where the union activities take place very often, influences the participation of the workers.

Out of 159 workers in our study 96 respondents live near to the factory within a distance of 4 kms; fifty-four respondents live within 5 to 10 kms distance from the factory and only nine workers live far away from the factory ( 11 to 20 kms.).

Table 7.23: Distance between Residence and factory and Extent of Participation.

Distance	1 to 4	5 - 10	11 +	Total
Partici- pation				
Low	21 (21.9)	7 (13.0)	1 (11.1)	29 (18.2)
Medium	45 (46.9)	21 (38.9)	6 (66.7)	72 (45.3)
High	30 (31.3)	26 (48.1)	2 (22.2)	58 (36.5)
Total	96 (100.0)	54 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Table No. 7.23 shows that the participation of the members who live within 5 to 10 kms. is higher than the participation of the members who live within 4 kms. from the factory or those who live far away from the factory (11 to 20 kms.). The study finds that those who live very far away are mostly medium level participants. The study reveals that the majority of those who lived close by (within 4 kms.) did not have any means of conveyance - bicycles and two wheelers such as mopeds, scooters or motorbikes - of their own. They have to walk down to their work place. This may be one of the reasons for their low level participation. Many of those who lived at a distance of 5 to 10 kms.

possess some personal means of conveyance.

Mode of Commuting and Extent of Participation:

The existing literature does not give any information about the relation between the mode of commuting to reach the place of work and participation of members. From the foregoing discussion we assume that those who have their own means such as bicycle, two wheelers, may participate in the union more actively than the members who do not have their own means and depend upon public transportation system. This is because the mobility of those who own means of conveyance becomes relatively easier.

Table 7.24: Mode of Commuting and Extent of Participation.

Mode of commuting  Partici- pation	By walk	City Bus	Bicycle	Two wheelers	Total
Low	5 (31.5)	3 (10.3)	20 (18.2)	1 (5.9)	29 (18.2)
Medium	8 (50.0)	10 (62.5)	51 (46.4)	3 (17.6)	72 (45.3)
High	3 (18.8)	3 (18.8)	39 (35.5)	13 (76.5)	58 (36.5)
Total	16 (100.0)	16 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	159 (100.0)

Chi-Square = 17.17; df. = 6;  $p < .01$ .

Table 7.24 shows that sixteen respondents commute to work by walking; sixteen respondents commute to work by city bus; 110 respondents commute to work by bicycle; and seventeen respondents commute to work by two wheelers.

The study shows that participation of workers who commute by walking is low to medium. The participation of members who commute by public transportation system is moderate. The participation of members who commute by bicycle is moderate to high and finally, the participation of members who commute by twowheelers is high.

It is found from the study that mode of commuting to workplace is associated with members' participation. We shall explore whether it affects participation of members in democratic and oligarchic unions differently.

It is found (Table 7.25) in the democratic unions the majority of the workers are medium to high level participants irrespective of mode of commuting to the workplace. However, in the case of the minority of low level participants those who commute to work by walk or public transportation system are more in number.

On the other hand, in the case of oligarchic unions the majority of the workers are low to medium level participants irrespective of mode of commuting to the workplace. In the case of the minority of active participants members

Table 7.25: Mode of commuting, structure of the union and Extent of Participation.

Participation	Democratic					Oligarchic				
	By walk	Bicycle	Bus	Two wheelers	Total	By walk	Bicycle	Bus	Two wheelers	Total
Low	3 (23.1)	7 (9.7)	2 (16.7)	-	12 (10.9)	2 (66.7)	13 (34.2)	1 (25.0)	1 (25.0)	17 (34.7)
Medium	7 (53.8)	31 (43.1)	7 (58.3)	1 (7.7)	46 (41.8)	1 (33.3)	20 (52.6)	3 (75.0)	2 (50.0)	26 (53.1)
High	3 (23.1)	34 (47.2)	3 (25.0)	12 (92.3)	52 (47.3)	-	5 (13.2)	-	1 (25.0)	6 (12.2)
Total	13 (100.0)	72 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	38 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	49 (100.0)



who have their own means of conveyance are more among the high level participants.

The data demonstrate that: (i) the participation of the members who have their own means of conveyance is higher than those who commute by walk or by public transportation system; and (ii) there is a difference between the participation of members who commute by bicycles and twowheelers. The participation of members who have twowheelers is higher than the participation of members who have bicycles. It appears that those who possess twowheelers are economically better off than others.

#### Income and Extent of Participation:

In this study data on income of workers from different sources were collected. Some studies (Sayles and Strauss 1953: 204; Seidman et al., 1958: 171; Purcell, 1953: 205; Kyllonen, 1951: 528-30; Spinrad, 1960:239; and Sharma, 1971: 348 ) found that the highly active participants in their unions are those who earn high income. We shall hypothesize that participation of the members who earn high income is greater than the members who earn less.

Table 7.26: Income from Job and Extent of Members' Participation.

Income Partici- pation	300-900	901-1500	1501 +	Total	Income from other sources
Low	10 (26.31)	19 (17.27)	-	29 (18.2)	9 (13.54)
Medium	22 (57.89)	46 (41.81)	4 (36.36)	72 (45.3)	27 (41.53)
High	6 (15.78)	45 (40.90)	7 (63.64)	58 (36.5)	29 (44.61)
Total	38 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	159 (100.0)	65 (40) (100.0)

The total income of workers from their jobs ranges from Rs. 300 to Rs. 2400 per month. Table 7.26 shows that a majority of the members earn between Rs. 901 to Rs. 1500 per month. The study shows that the participation of the members who earn between Rs. 300 to 900 is low to moderate. This is lower than the participation of the members whose income is above Rs. 901. The participation of the members who earn between Rs. 901 to 1500 is medium to high. Finally, the participation of the members who earn more than Rs.1500, is higher than other two groups.

Our study shows that higher the income higher the participation. We shall examine whether the same pattern exists in democratic or oligarchic unions.

Table 7.27: Income, Structure of the union and Extent of Participation.

Structure	Democratic Unions										Oligarchic Unions														
	Income 300-600		601-900		901-1200		1201-1500		1501-2000		Total		300-600		601-900		901-1200		1201-1500		1501-2000		Total		
Participation																									
Low	5	1	3	3	12	3	1	11	2	17															
	(22.7)	(20.0)	(7.0)	(10.0)	(10.9)	(42.9)	(25.0)	(45.8)	(15.4)	(34.7)															
Medium	13	2	18	10	46	4	3	10	8	26															
	(59.1)	(40.0)	(41.8)	(33.3)	(41.8)	(57.1)	(75.0)	(41.7)	(61.5)	(53.1)															
High	4	2	22	17	52	-	-	3	3	6															
	(18.2)	(40.0)	(51.2)	(56.7)	(47.3)			(12.5)	(23.1)	(12.2)															
Total	22	5	43	30	110	7	4	24	13	49															
	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)			(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)

In the democratic unions as we have seen earlier, the majority of the workers are medium to high level participants irrespective of the income. However, in case of the minority of low level participants those who have income less than Rs. 900 per month are more in number.

In the case of the oligarchic unions, the majority of the workers are low to medium level participants irrespective of their income. However, in the case of the active participants, members who have income between Rs. 901 to 1500 are more among high level participants.

Workers whose income is between Rs. 901 and 2400 are also permanent workers having more experience than the workers who earn less than Rs. 900. As we have mentioned earlier secure jobs, enough experience and stability in life facilitate members' participation to greater extent. Workers without secure jobs, and less experience do not exhibit higher levels of participation even in democratic unions. This strengthens our earlier observation that class consciousness combined with a certain degree of economic well being facilitates participation to a greater extent.

The existing literature does not provide any information regarding the relationship between income from other sources and levels of participation. We shall explore whether income from other sources has any influence on members' participation. In this study income from other sources

include: income from land; income from business and income from rent etc. The study shows those who have income from other sources are moderate to highly active participants. We may generalize from this study that the workers who are economically better-off participate in the union affairs more actively than the workers who have low income. It indicates that those who have higher income can afford to take risks involved in active participation in the union affairs.

We have pointed out in the review of literature that sociological studies which have attempted to explain the reasons for participation differentials among workers have tended to rely heavily on the socio-economic background variables of the workers. They have ignored the influence of the history of the union-management relations and the structure of the union on the levels of participation. Hence, explanation of most of the studies at best are partial explanations and have failed to yield theoretical insights into the problem.

We have demonstrated that workers at a given point of time are inheritors of a particular type of union-management relations and the workers' participation in the unions within the context of the structure of the union. In other words, the socio-economic background variables do not operate in a vacuum. It is possible to derive meaningful conclusions

only if one looks at the influence of the background variables in the context of the structure of the union.

For this purpose we have carried out analysis at two levels. First, we have examined the relationship between the socio-economic background variables and level of participation. Based on the significance of the relationship, we have selected some variables to examine if their influence is uniformly similar in different structural settings of the unions. That is, we have attempted to see if the socio-economic background variables per se influence the levels of participation. We have observed that age, education, marital status, size of the household, security of job, length of service, means of commuting and income significantly influence members' participation. In the case of the socio-economic background variables which seemed significant further analysis by controlling for the structure of the unions has revealed the following things.

- (a) Democratic unions tend to encourage participation of all the sections of the workers. However, there is a minority of workers whose participation is low. The minority of inactive members in the democratic unions consists of workers who are very young and unmarried, living in large size households, who do not have job security, have less experience, have low income, and who do not have personal means of conveyance tend to

be low level participants. Further, workers who are very old and on the verge of retirement, illiterate, living in large size households, also tend to be low level participants. These demographic, socio-economic characteristics of the minority of the workers seem to place constraints on their participation in spite of the opportunities for higher participation provided by democratic unions.

- (b) Oligarchic unions tend to discourage participation by majority of the workers. However, a minority of workers display higher levels of participation. This minority consists of workers who are middle aged, married, living in small or medium size households. This minority also includes workers who have security of job have gained experience and who have personal means of conveyance.

We find it difficult to explain the high level participation of the minority of workers in the oligarchic unions merely in terms of their socio-economic background variables. It appears that this minority of active workers have close personal relations with the union leaders. Earlier, we have shown that relations based on mutual benefits exist between the leadership and a small section of workers in the oligarchic unions.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSIONS

Workers' participation in trade union activities is one of the important aspects of the labour movement. Membership participation in union activities has implications for industrial relations in general and union-management relations in particular. A group of scholars has taken into account certain socio-economic and ideological attributes to explain members' participation in trade union activities. Research studies of these scholars investigated why some workers participate in union activities more than the others. However, they failed to analyse why some unions elicit greater participation than others. Another group of scholars has attempted to analyse the relationship between the workers and their unions. Through the existing pattern of relation between the workers and unions they investigated members' participation in their union activities. But these scholars did not include the socio-economic background of the members to find out its influence on members' participation in trade union activities. However, some scholars did recognize the influence of the history of union-management relations on workers' participation in their unions. But they did not systematically analyse the relationship between the history of union-management relations and workers' participation in trade unions. Some studies have been carried out in a multi-union situation and others



have been carried out in a single-union situation. This might lead to problems of comparability of the findings and hence creates a gap in having comparative picture of members' participation in trade union activities in single and multiple-union situations.

Keeping in view these lacunae in the existing literature, the present study has attempted to investigate the members' participation by adopting a holistic perspective. It has taken into account: (a) the history of union-management relations and its influence on the structure and organization of the union; (b) social structure and organizations of the unions and their influence on participation of members; and (c) socio-economic background of workers and its influence on members' participation in the context of the structure of the union. The present study differs from other studies in the sense that it is a comparative study of the participation of workers in two types of situations i.e., single and multiple-union situations. We have adopted the theory of union democracy as a framework for analysis. This research inquiry has been carried out with the following objectives:

- (1) to find out the influence of the history of union-management relations on structure and organization of the unions;
- (2) to find out the influence of structure and organization of the trade unions on members' participation in union activities;

- (3) to find out the influence of socio-economic background variables on members' participation in union activities in the context of a given organizational framework of a union.

For the purpose of the present inquiry on workers' participation in trade union activities 159 workers from single and multiple-union industrial units, engaged in the manufacturing of automobile components, were selected by adopting systematic random sampling technique. The sample consists of 80 respondents from Bimetal Bearings (the single union firm) and 79 respondents from Thomson Radiators (the multiple-union firm). Primary data were collected from the workers included in the sample and secondary data were collected from sources such as union publications (Pamphlets, Magazines, etc.) and local news papers.

Analysis of the socio-economic background of the members has shown that workers in our study are mostly middle aged i.e., 36 to 50 years. A substantial proportion of the workers have had education upto high school level and some of them have college level education too. One fourth of the workers in the sample, have technical qualifications. Further, the analysis has revealed that the industrial jobs are no longer confined to Harijans and other lower castes as it used to be in the earlier stages of industrial development. Today, the non-Brahmin high caste groups are increasingly

taking to industrial employment. In our study particularly the dominant castes in the region seem to exercise their influence to get into the organized industry for their employment. The lower caste groups tend to be excluded systematically from the industrial employment. It appears that in future members of the lower castes and depressed classes would be forced to seek employment in the unorganized sector, characterized by low wages, irregular employment and lack of job-security.

Our study also supports the evidence provided by recent studies that at present industrial labour is mostly drawn from urban areas. From the analysis of migration status of the workers we have found that the Coimbatore area has been able to meet most of the demand for the industrial labour. Most of the workers in our study have spent more than 11 years in the service of the same organization. This suggests that the Indian industrial labour force has attained a higher degree of stability.

Most of the workers in our study have stable employment. The job-security directly influences the income level. That is, for the same job, differential wages are paid to temporary and permanent employees. Most of the workers get reasonably high wages. Further, it is found that the sons of the industrial workers have greater tendency to enter into industrial occupations than those from the agricultural

families or business families.

Existing sociological literature on members' participation in trade unions in India does not seem to take into account the historical development of union-management relations and its influence on members' participation in union activities. To show that the evolution of union-management relations brings into being a certain tradition of unionism in individual industrial establishments, we have analysed the history of unionism in two industrial units. Analysis of unionism in the Simpson group of companies has revealed that the economic crisis created by the World War II led to the emergence of union at the group level. The struggle between the union and the management continued from mid 1940's to 1955. After 1955 with the government's intervention in the industrial relations of the Simpson group of companies, the union and the management learned to cooperate with each other. Thus, a give-and-take policy emerged in 1955 and it continued till 1971. During this relatively long period, the union was controlled by a leadership which enjoyed the patronage of the management and the political party which was in power in Tamil Nadu. The leadership was dominated by one single leader who became oligarchic. He favoured some workers who supported him and harassed others who opposed him. Due to the coalition between the union leadership and the management, the workers

were not satisfied with the union leader. Because of the absence of the organized factions the dissatisfied members became apathetic towards the union. The dramatic change began to take place in 1967 in the unionism of the Simpson group of Companies. The then union president contested in the General election to Parliament as a Congress nominee. This indicates the extent of the political patronage enjoyed by the leader. Due to president's open political involvement the members who were dissatisfied with his leadership aligned themselves with the regional political party (DMK) which came into power in 1967 and forced him to resign from the union office in 1971. But the new leadership was no more democratic than the old leadership for different reasons. The leadership was not a popularly elected leadership but it was foisted by the ruling party (the DMK). Again the workers struggled hard till 1972 to change the undemocratic union leadership.

The involvement of the leadership in politics and the dissatisfaction it caused among the rank and file perceptuated two factions. The factional struggle began in 1967 and still continues. One cannot say that in this kind of intensive factional conflict the members were inactive. Instead, they participated actively in the union politics to restore normalcy.

Due to the institutionalized factional conflict the union became democratic since 1972. With the active participation of the members the democratic union struggled against the management to protect its members' interests. The eventful history of unionism in the Simpson group of companies, characterized by workers' struggle to dislodge the oligarchic leadership and the emergence of intense factional conflicts within the union and the antagonistic relations that developed between the union and the management in due course of time, increased the economic and political awareness of the workers and in turn contributed to a higher degree of participation of workers in their union.

The history of unionism in the Thomson Radiators has revealed that the economic crisis and the management's exploitation led to the formation of the first union in the early 1960's. Due to the hostility of the management towards unionism, the union functioned as a secret society for some time and recruited members. During early 1960's some workers were highly active in forming the union and unionizing the workers in the unit. The first union was affiliated to the AITUC. Later on, due to the split in the communist party affiliated central trade unions at the national level, into AITUC and CITU, the union in the Thomson Radiators became affiliated to the CITU.

After 1965 the union leadership entered into coalition with the management. This coalition made the members apathetic. This dissatisfaction among the workers led to emergence of the LPF union owing allegiance to the DMK party, in 1969. The LPF union emerged to articulate the aspirations of the dissatisfied members because the existing union did not provide scope for another faction. In 1976, due to changes in the national political scene, as a consequence of declaration of the Emergency in 1975, all the members of the LPF switched their loyalties and got their union affiliated to the INTUC owing allegiance to the Congress Party. The switch over took place because the majority of the members who were DMK sympathisers wanted to avoid political harassment. Some of the leaders had certain vested interests. They realized that by switching over to the INTUC they could perpetuate their activities. They used their involvement in the INTUC union to protect themselves and their vested interests during the Emergency period. That is why the INTUC did not attract a large number of workers later on. The INTUC was a short-lived union in Thomson Radiators.

In 1979 due to some internal changes in the union like the resignation of a popular leader, the INTUC was dissolved and the AITUC union emerged. The AITUC union was active till 1983. It became inactive later due to the resignation of the leader from his factory job. His



resignation created vacuum in the union leadership. With no effective leadership, the union failed to make any impact on the workers. In the AITUC union there emerged a difference of opinion with regard to the method to be employed in solving the workers' problem. One group advocated militant methods to solve the workers' problem. Another group advocated conciliatory methods. The group which advocated militant method did not see a promising future in the AITUC union and left it to start the LPF union in 1983. The LPF union, as we have mentioned above, has political linkages with the DMK party which was in power during 1967-75.

The history of unionism in the Thomson Radiators has shown that the LPF union maintained pro-worker profile, the CITU union developed pro-management leanings and the AITUC union was in a dilemma whether to be pro-worker or pro-management union. Either of the choices seemed to be a threat to the survival of the AITUC because of the positions of the other two unions.

Our analysis has shown that the evolution of the union-management relations over a period of time influences dynamics of unionism. Further, changes in the political arena outside the industry also affects unionism at plant level. Intense inter-union rivalries weaken the workers' strength and simultaneously place the management in an advantageous position. The rank and file, faced with



oligarchic tendencies of the leadership, does not seem to discipline the leadership. The workers seem to resort to changing the leadership which in course of time becomes oligarchic or to changing their loyalties to other unions.

Our analysis of social structure and organization of the unions has shown that evolution of union-management relations has influenced the pattern of social structure and organization of the unions. The SESU union, which has evolved into a strong collective institution of the labour, developed antagonistic relations with the management. Due to its antagonistic relations with the management as well as the established factionalism the SESU union, it evolved democratic norms to govern the interaction among the members. The SESU encourages members to participate in decision-making process. The union upholds the democratic method of union election by which members can elect union leaders of their choice without fear. Further, the SESU gives freedom to members to discuss and dissent in the union meetings. The leadership of the SESU responds to members' problems sincerely and seeks to solve their problems satisfactorily. The SESU maintains a system of communication which makes information accessible to the members. The democratic social structure and organization of the SESU union enhances membership participation in union activities.

In the multiple-union plant the CITU in the initial stages was a militant union which entered into a coalition with the management later on. The pro-management relations has led to violation of democratic norms in the union. The CITU union does not give the majority of the workers the opportunities to participate in decision-making. Democratic procedures are not followed in union elections, scope for dissent is absent in the CITU union. Further, the leadership does not seem to solve members' problems effectively. System of communication prevalent in the CITU union is not based on principles of exchange and equality.

The AITUC union has not been able to adopt a consistent approach with regard to its relations with management. It has failed to adopt consistent method in tackling the workers' problems. Decision on vital issues are invariably taken by the leadership and members have a say only in the mundane day-to-day affairs of the union. Though the democratic method is adopted in the elections, the leaders have shown keen interest to continue in the office and the leadership has been successful in perpetuating itself. The leaders seem to indirectly discourage the members to rise to leadership positions. Problems of workers are solved on individual basis rather than collective basis. The individualistic approach to workers problems is favoured by the management. The communication system is based on restricted, one-way flow of information from the leadership to the rank and file.

The social environment of the AITUC union places the social structure and organization of the union closer to oligarchic pattern.

The LPF union, which was formed by a group of militants who were earlier members in the AITUC, has developed antagonistic relations with the management. In the LPF union the majority of the members participate in taking decision on normal and critical issues. The rank and file in the LPF have freedom to elect leaders of their choice. The problems of members are solved by adopting a collective approach. However, the special problems of individuals are also given due consideration by the leadership. The majority of the members exercise their freedom in expressing their views and their dissent in the union meetings. The communication system is more effective. The LPF union has been able to follow democratic norms in its government and in general interaction between the leadership and the rank and file. The LPF resembles SESU in its social organization. This kind of social organization of the union is conducive for members' participation in union activities. We have attempted to show in our analysis that union-management relations as they have evolved over a period of time, influences the social organization of the trade unions which in turn promotes or hinders members' participation in union activities.

Our analysis of extent of members' participation in various unions has shown that participation of the SESU and the LPF unions is greater than the participation of members in the CITU and AITUC unions. This significant difference in the levels of participation is due to the democratic social structure and organization in the former two unions and oligarchic structure and organization in the latter two unions. The findings of this study corroborate the hypothesis that democracy in the union and members' participation are positively related.

An interesting feature that emerged in the analysis is that in the CITU and AITUC unions, which are inactive and oligarchic unions, participation of members is high in certain activities. For instance, in the CITU and the AITUC unions, members' participation is high in paying subscription, bringing grievances to unions, voting in election and preparing demand charter. A closer look at these activities reveal that these are mild activities which do not involve members in any confrontation with the union leadership or the management. On the other hand, members' participation is low in activities like - attending GBMs, asking questions, answering questions, giving dissent, regular visit to union office, membership drive and canvassing in the union elections. Their participation is low in activities which lead to differences of opinion and confrontation with their union leaders and in activities where they run the risk of

being victimized by the management. The less serious the implications of an action the greater is the participation by the members in the CITU and the AITUC unions.

In the case of the active democratic unions like the SESU and the LPF also, members' participation is low in certain activities. For example, in the case of the SESU union, members' participation is very low in activities like gherao and picketing. That is, even in the active unions only highly active participants take part in the actions which are very risky and expose them to the direct scrutiny of the management. The extent of members' participation in the CITU and the AITUC unions is low to moderate and in the case of the SESU and the LPF unions it is moderate to high.

We may conclude from our analysis that democracy in the unions facilitates or enhances members' participation in union activities. If the union develops conflict relations with the management then it is more likely to be a democratic union and the members' participation tends to be high. If a union develops pro-management leanings, it is more likely to be oligarchic and members' participation tends to be low. In the unions which have pro-management leanings members' participation tends to be lower during crisis situation than during normal situation. On the other hand, in the pro-worker democratic unions, the

participation of the members tends to be higher during crisis situation than during normal situation provided the factions cooperate with each other. That is, in democratic unions, the members demonstrate their solidarity to a greater extent in crisis situations.

We have pointed out in the review of literature that sociological studies which have attempted to explain the reasons for participation differentials among workers have tended to rely heavily on the socio-economic background variables of the workers. They have ignored the influence of the history of the union-management relations and the structure of the union on the levels of participation. Hence, most of the studies, at best provide partial explanations and have failed to yield theoretical insights into the problem.

We have demonstrated that the workers at a given point of time are inheritors of a particular type of union-management relations and the workers' participation in the unions takes place within the context of the structure of the unions. In other words, the socio-economic background variables do not operate in a vacuum. It is possible to derive meaningful conclusions only if one looks at the influence of the background variables in the context of the structure of the union.

For this purpose we have carried out analysis at two levels. First, we have examined the relationship between the

socio-economic background variables and level of participation. Based on the significance of the relationship, we have selected some variables to examine if their influence is uniformly similar in different structural settings of the unions. That is, we have attempted to see if the socio-economic background variables per se influence the levels of participation. We have observed that age, education, marital status, size of the household, security of job, length of service, means of commuting, and income significantly influence members' participation. Socio-economic background variables which seemed significant were selected for further analysis by controlling for the structure of the unions. The analysis revealed the following features.

- (a) Democratic unions tend to encourage participation of all the sections of the workers irrespective of their socio-economic background and demographic profile. However, there is a minority of workers whose participation is low. The minority of inactive members in the democratic unions consists of workers who are very young and unmarried and are living in large size households. Further, workers who do not have job security, have less experience, have low income, and those who do not have personal means of conveyance tend to be low level participants. Further, workers who are very old, on the verge of retirement, illiterate and are living in large size households also tend to be low



level participants. These demographic, socio-economic characteristics of the minority of the workers seem to place constraints on their participation in spite of the opportunities for higher participation provided by democratic unions.

- (b) Oligarchic unions tend to discourage participation by majority of the workers. However, a minority of workers display higher levels of participation in the oligarchic unions. This minority consists of workers who are middle aged, married, and are living in small or medium size households. This minority also includes workers who have security of job and have gained experience and also those who have personal means of conveyance.

We find it difficult to explain the high level participation of the minority of workers in the oligarchic unions merely in terms of their socio-economic background variables. It appears that this minority of active workers have close personal relations with the union leaders. Earlier we have shown that relations based on mutual benefits exist between the leadership and a small section of workers in the oligarchic unions.

Based on the findings of the study following generalizations may be made.

The union oligarchy does not necessarily arise due to increasing complexity and size of the union. In the Indian



context the oligarchic trade unionism at plant level emerges due to coalition between the union leadership and the management. A numerically small union may also become oligarchic.

Changes in the union-management relations over a period of time influence social organization of a particular union. Therefore, if a union has evolved pro-worker ideology and antagonistic relations with the management then it tends to be democratic union. If a union has developed pro-management leanings it tends to be oligarchic union.

Union democracy enhances or promotes members' participation in union activities. That is, when members are given equal opportunities to: (a) participate in decision-making; (b) discuss things in the union meetings; and (c) elect the leaders of their choice, the members' participation tends to be high. A union headed by a leadership which listens to the problems of workers and solves them effectively also enhances participation.

Oligarchy in the union hinders members' participation in union activities. When members are not given equal opportunities to participate in: (a) decision-making; (b) discuss things at union meetings; and (c) freedom to elect the leaders of their choice, membership participation tends to be low. Added to this, the leadership which does not solve the problems effectively contributes to low-level

participation among the members.

When there is scope for institutionalized factions, members take part in the factional politics actively. Well organized factions within a union serve as forums to express members' feelings and promote membership participation. Hence, organized factionalism serves as a life-blood of union democracy.

When there is no scope for factionalism within union due to oligarchic nature of the leadership it leads to emergence of new unions. The union members do not seem to discipline their leader. Confronted by an oligarchic leader, the workers either switch their loyalties to other leaders or resort to starting a new union. In either case there exists a possibility for the emergence of oligarchic leadership. The tendency to switch loyalties leaders and to form multiple unions divides the working class.

Regarding the participation of members in union activities, seeking an explanation for participation differentials merely in terms of the socio-economic background variables seems to be highly inadequate. Only within the framework of union democracy or oligarchy socio-economic variables exercise influence.

Analysis of the history of trade unionism in the two units in our study helps us to understand the labour movement at the micro-level. It appears that, in India

labour movement at micro-level mainly concentrates on the economic advancement: protection of wages; job-security; bonus; and other economic benefits. In India the trade unions have not been able to widen their scope beyond the factory gate. In our study it has been noticed that none of the unions has undertaken any programme to educate the workers regarding the importance of social unity among the workers.

The labour movement at micro-level lacks long-term ideological orientation. Instead its activities are centered around short-term economic well being. We have observed that even communist unions concentrate on short-term gains. The central trade union organizations including the ones affiliated to the Communist parties do not seem to pay much attention to the ideological orientation of their local unions. They simply grant affiliation to unions mainly to show the numerical strength. They do not seem to show interest in educating the working class.

Political parties, including the parties based on regional and ethnic ideologies, attempt to mobilise the support of industrial workers by organizing their own labour wings and getting the local unions affiliated to the labour wings. For example, the DMK party which owes its origin to non-Brahmin movement, came to power in Tamil Nadu in 1967. In 1969, the DMK party which was in power created its own labour wing and sought to bring workers into its fold. The

creation of Labour Progressive Federation (LPF) at the state level by the DMK party influenced the plant level unions and as a result LPF unions emerged at the plant level in almost all industries in the state.

The findings of this study suggest that the trade unions should endorse the principles of democracy and work towards the realization of this principles. This will make the unions gain power to interact with the management more effectively. This may lead the management to realize that they cannot ignore the power of the workers and make the management interact with workers on a democratic basis. History of unionism in our study has revealed that oligarchic unions could become democratic and vice versa. The unions which exhibited oligarchic/democratic profiles at the time of the study may undergo change with changes in union-management relations, changes in political arena outside the industry and changes in the leadership pattern.

In order to build a theory of workers' participation in trade union, future research should adopt a holistic perspective and take into account the constellation of forces- history of union-management relations, social structure and organisation of unions, socio-economic background of the workers and to certain extent, societal forces like politics and the state.

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